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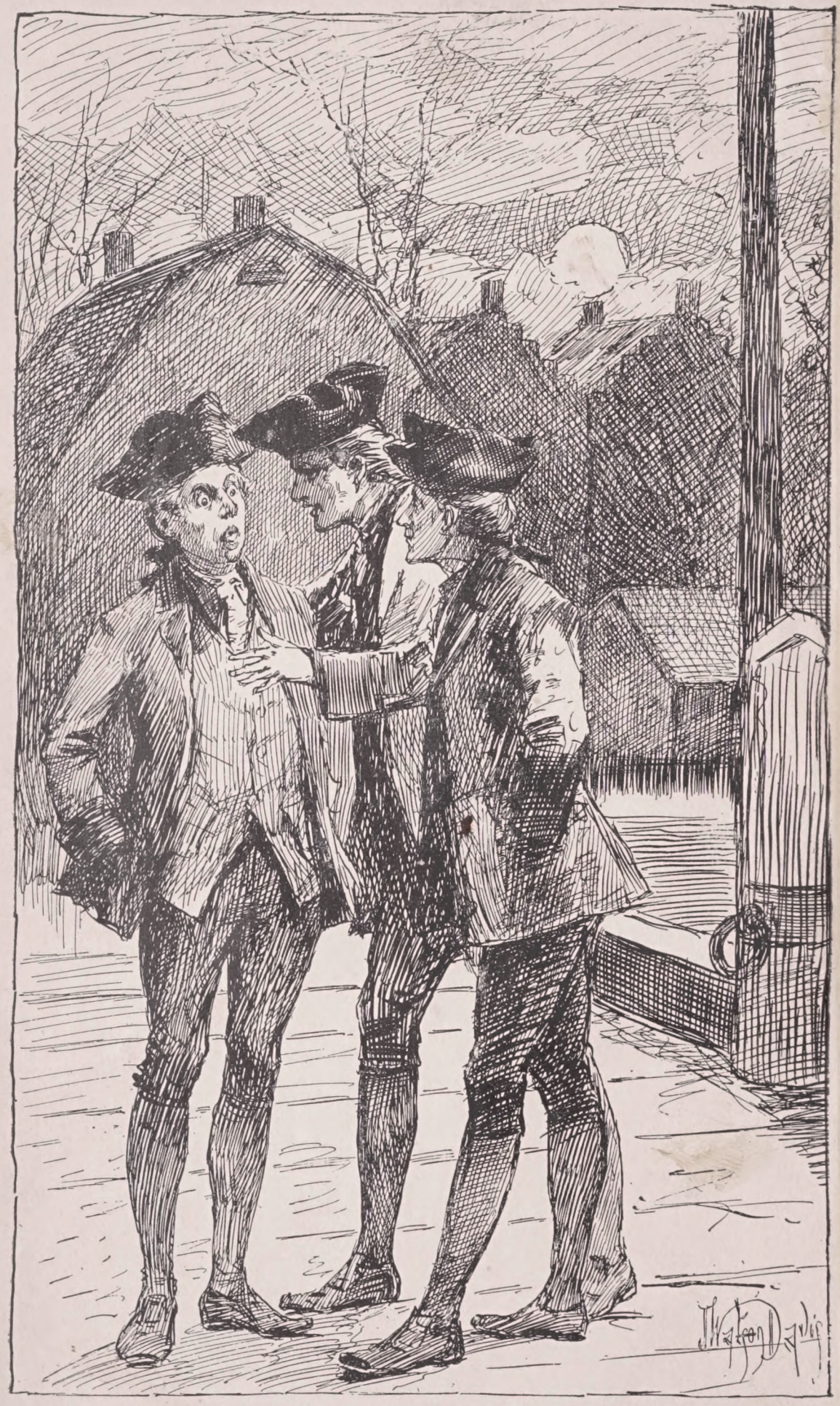

"THERE IS A PLAN ON FOOT TO MURDER, OR MAKE PRISONER, GEORGE WASHINGTON," SAID THAD GRAVELY.

Frontis. *Laughing Mary, p. 15.*

THE CAPTURE

OF

THE LAUGHING MARY.

A Story of Three New York Boys in 1776.

As Set Down by Eliphalet Willett and Edited

By JAMES OTIS.

With Eight Page Illustrations by J. Watson Davis.

NEW YORK:
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CAPTURE OF THE LAUGHING MARY.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG PATRIOTS.

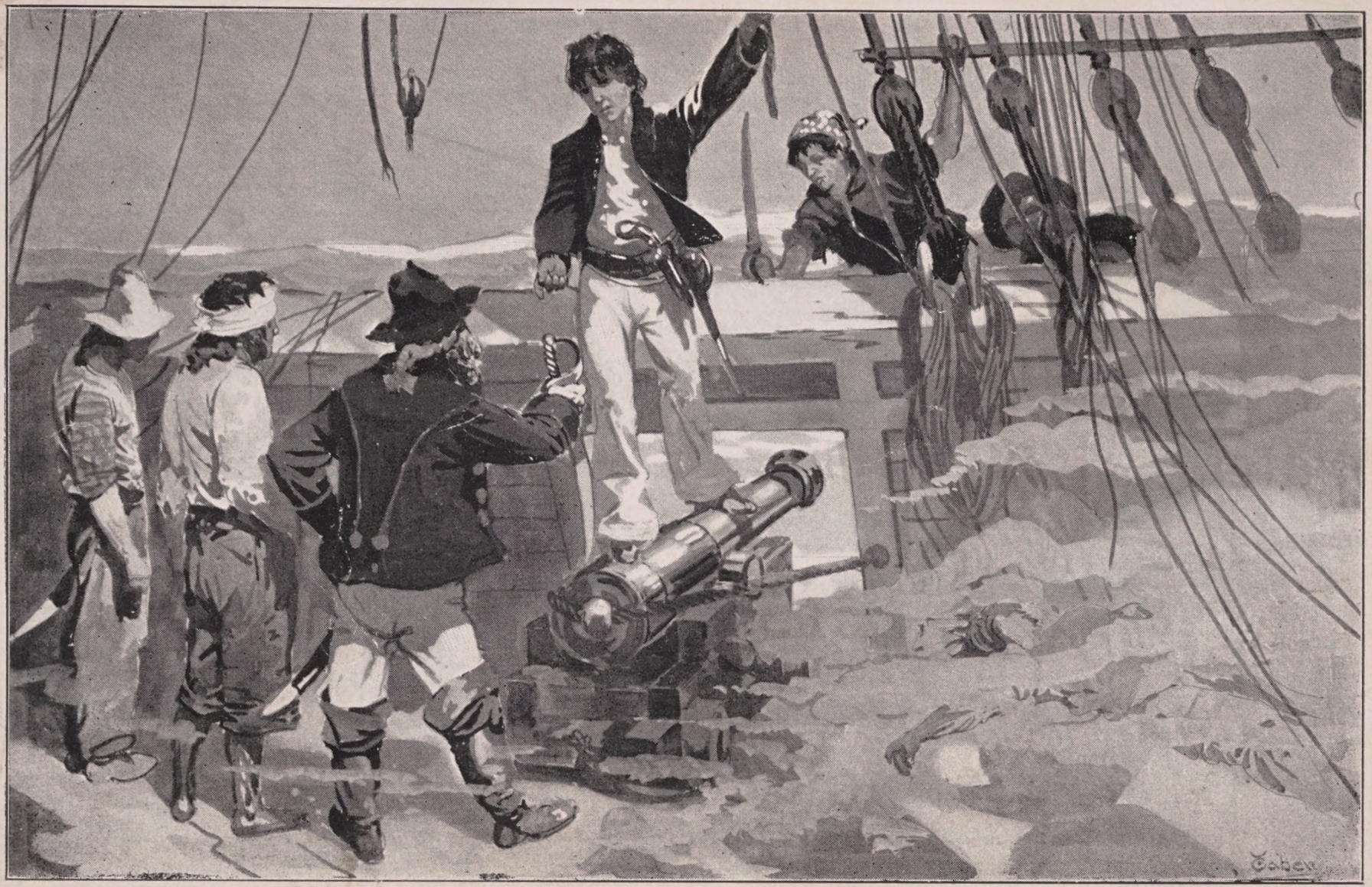
We are so besieged by the snow here in Morristown—and by "we," of course, I mean the American army—that there is but little to occupy our time save the routine of camp duty. The two comrades who shared with me the excitement, and took upon themselves the most dangerous portion of the enterprise, when we were so fortunate as to have rendered a signal service to the American people, have decided that in no better way can these winter days be spent than by writing down all which has happened to us since the hour we were minded to take up arms against the king.

Although it is but right that I should call

every member of this army a comrade, in using the term it seems impossible to apply it with true meaning to any other than those two friends in whose company I have been almost constantly, since it was our rare good fortune to have had no mean share in the unearthing of the plot which was formed against General Washington, just before the colonists refused longer to call themselves Englishmen and became Americans.

It would be useless to repeat in this record those events which took place in the colony of Massachusetts up to the day when the town of Boston was evacuated by the English forces, and when we in New York believed Howe would at once attack our city, for so short a time has elapsed that the stirring incidents are fresh in the minds of all.

During the year 1775 none of us—meaning my two comrades and myself—had thought of becoming soldiers, although we were nearly of age when we could do so lawfully; but after General Israel Putnam arrived with his forces in New York on the fourth of last April, to make his headquarters in the mansion owned by Captain Kennedy of the



THE FIRST PERSON HE MET WAS CAPTAIN YEO.

British army, at No. 1 Broadway, we began to realize there was a part for us to play.

I am telling the story very badly in not having first set down the names of my comrades, than whom to-day no boys can be found in all the colonies more ready to endure privation or incur danger.

Sam Antill deserves the first place in this record because of what he has done already, and even though it be that his mother is first cousin to John Antill the Royalist, who is—or was at the time this record should begin—postmaster of New York, no one can accuse him ever so lightly of other than loyal thoughts to the cause.

Then comes Thaddeus Burr, namesake of him of Fairfield, Connecticut, but of no kin, and there is in my mind a great doubt even now whether Thad or Sam should take the first place in this record, for, with nothing but friendship in their minds for the other, each strives constantly to outstrip his friend in brave deeds.

As for myself, if I deserve ever so slight a place in this story, it is only because Colonel Marinus Willett is my uncle, and he it was,

so my mother has often said, who gave to me the name of Eliphalet.

This seems but a lame beginning to what should be a brave story, and although Sam will not admit it, I am certain he was disappointed in my attempt when, a few moments ago, he read what had been written.

However, since they both have decided I shall be the one to make up this record, my shortcomings must not be set down against me, because, having resolved to devote all my mind to becoming a soldier, I cannot be expected to write as would those whose trade it is to wield a pen.

As I have said before, it was not until General Israel Putnam came to New York that any of us three boys had decided to become soldiers.

While the British were shut up in Boston it was as if we of New York might be allowed to go our own way, and not until January, when General Charles Lee began to fortify the city, did it appear that any great amount of fighting would fall to our share in the struggle with his majesty.

Then it was that the Tories were called

upon to take the oath of allegiance; the city was intrenched, and we began to understand that something more than the ordinary street brawls with which we had been treated would be visited upon us.

We three were on Broad Street when the Sons of Liberty prevented the Royal Irish Regiment from carrying away arms belonging to the city, when the troops went to Boston, and at that time the British forces made so little resistance to Colonel Willett's—my uncle's—demand, that it seemed to us boys as if these veteran soldiers of the king were afraid of the Americans.

Perhaps it was this which prevented us from realizing how near to our doors the bloody business of war was; but when General Putnam arrived, and a few days later General Washington himself came, making his headquarters at the Richmond Hill House; when volunteers were not only called for but sought after, we talked the matter over among ourselves and decided that although I, who had but then turned fifteen years, was over-young for a soldier, my stature was such that the recruiting officer

would have but little hesitancy about permitting me to sign the rolls, therefore all would enter the army.

My mother, who lived on Ann Street near William, when I talked with her regarding the course I would pursue, had not refused her permission, although she did not give it; Sam's father was already among the forces at Cambridge, and therefore he could by right enlist; while Thad, having neither father nor mother, was at liberty to do as he chose.

When we had come to this decision Lord Howe's fleet was expected in the harbor at any hour, and it had been said that his lordship left Halifax with the intention of at once capturing New York.

When he did arrive, two weeks after the commander-in-chief entered the city, he landed at Staten Island without any effort having been made to put an obstacle in his way, because of the fact that our troops were so dispersed at King's Bridge, Paulus Hook, Governor's Island, and Brooklyn Heights that there were not American soldiers enough to make any opposition.

Although having determined we would enter the army, none of us had taken any steps in the matter, for it was rumored—and as is well known very many believed—that Lord Howe would make in the king's name such a proposition to us of the colonies as would prevent a war, even though much blood had already been spilled.

It was on the morning of the third day after Governor Tryon—afraid that his own precious body was in danger—had left the city and taken refuge on the Duchess of Gordon—one of Lord Howe's ships—that Thad, Sam and I, having just come from Bowling Green, where we had loitered to hear the news of the day, stopped on the corner of Dock Street at White Hall Slip, to talk as we had for at least an hundred times before, of what we ought to do, but yet lacked the heart while it was possible further bloodshed might be averted.

As we stood there a great crowd came through Pearl Street, and in their midst two negroes who were in the custody of the watch.

It was not necessary to ask why these men

had been apprehended, for the cries of those around soon told that they were accused of having carried news from the city to Governor Tryon, and save for the vigilance of those who had the Africans in charge, the mob would have handled them most roughly.

Until this moment it had not seemed possible to me any person, unless it might be one whose very life was the stake, would willingly betray the cause which had been so well begun by those of Massachusetts, and even though these fellows' skins were dark their crime was not the less great, for it appeared to me to be the interest of the bonded as well as the free that the yoke of oppression which had been borne so long and so heavily should be lifted.

"How can it be that those negroes could have learned anything which would be of importance to Governor Tryon?" Thad said as if asking of himself the question, and Sam replied promptly:

"Most likely they are the servants of such as are loyal to the cause, and having learned something which the Royalist governor

might wish to know, have carried him the information for the sake of reward."

Just at that moment it did not seem as if I had more concern in what we had witnessed than any other in the city who desired the success of the American army; but before we three parted on that day I began to realize for the first time that even boys might be able to do something of importance—something which would win the approval and praise of the officers of our army.

While the rabble surrounding the prisoners were passing us my comrades and myself had been forced to stand close against the building on the inside of the walk, and were yet in that position when, as if following the mob and not wishing such fact should be known, two white men and a negro passed us slowly as they indulged in a spirited conversation, speaking so loudly that we could without difficulty overhear the words.

"We must learn how much of the plan these fellows know," one of the white men said emphatically. "I cannot believe they were intrusted with any important portion of the work; but yet the fact that they went

to the governor on this morning would seem to prove them in the confidence of our people."

"Whether they are or not can hardly benefit you, for we do not seem likely to get speech with them," his companion replied, and the first speaker said angrily:

"It must be done in some way."

"But how?"

"We must deliver Ham up," and the man nodded toward the black member of the party, "on the charge of being a suspicious person, in the hope that he would be confined near them. I tell you, Parsons, this whole scheme may be defeated if these fellows should be brought to confess even so much as to who sent them, and it is more than likely every effort will be made to this latter end."

Thad, who ever had his wits about him and was quick to act upon impulse, motioned silently to Sam and I, after which he followed the three who were so concerned regarding the prisoners.

I believed he was doing so out of curiosity, hoping to hear yet more of the conversation;

but if this had been the case he was disappointed, since it was not possible for us to follow very closely in the rear without our motives being suspected, and as we proceeded the fast-gathering throngs of people in the street not only prevented us from eavesdropping, but induced the three to speak in more guarded tones.

"What plan have you in your head, Thad?" Sam asked with a slight show of irritation. "Surely there is no reason why we should join the rabble who are escorting the Africans."

"Hark you, Sam, the men just ahead of us spoke of some plan which might be ruined if the prisoners should be made to confess ever so little."

"Well, what has that to do with us?"

"The Africans are charged with having carried news from the city to Governor Tryon."

"Well?"

"If they had gone to the frigate for nothing serious, why should there be such danger to these three whom we overheard? What can be ruined by their confession?"

"Now you are asking riddles."

"Nevertheless it is one which may be solved, and, boys, who shall say we cannot serve the cause, even though we do not wear a uniform? What say you to the possibility of our discovering the plot intended to work mischief to our friends?"

Sam laughed boisterously, and I foolishly followed his example, for at that moment Thad's bearing, and the idea that we three should be able to discover anything of importance to the cause seemed ridiculous; but before the sun rose again we looked at the matter in a far different light.

Nothing daunted by our mirth Thad Burr pressed the three men as closely as he dared, and because of our derision no longer appeared to care whether we accompanied him or not.

Just beyond the fish market the three entered a dram shop over against Martin's warehouse, and Thad followed, Sam and I remaining outside, perplexed to know what course we should pursue.

"Shall we wait for him?" I asked, half in jest, and instantly grew more sober-minded

as I saw the look of gravity which had suddenly come upon my comrade's face.

"Thad has a longer head than either you or I, 'Liphalet, and it stands us in hand to wait lest he should need assistance."

"Loitering on the streets in these troublous times is not a safe amusement."

"The watch will not come back this way for some time, and we are in no danger here at present."

"Why not follow Thad into the shop?"

"Because he didn't ask us."

"Yet he would have done so had we not made sport of his words."

"We will wait here," Sam said in a tone so sharp I knew it would be folly to argue against it.

And we did wait until I begged my comrade to come away, for I was weary with much standing, and it was high time to present myself at home.

"You may go if you choose; I shall stay till Thad comes out."

With that resolve Sam continued what seemed a useless vigil, and I could do no less than remain by his side.

We had long since been forced to move some distance from the shop because of the many patrons who entered or departed; but having kept our eyes fixed steadily upon the door, we knew beyond a question that Thad yet remained inside.

It was long past the hour when I should have been at home that our comrade came out, and I was startled by the look upon his face.

Without speaking, but looking at us in a way which we understood to mean that we should follow, he walked rapidly toward Ruger's wharf, not slackening pace until he stood upon the very stringpiece, where there was no possibility that what we said could be overheard.

"The negroes who were arrested had been sent by none other than his excellency the mayor of this city," Thad said impressively, and I stared at him as if believing he had taken leave of his senses, for I could not understand by his words that he had discovered anything of a startling nature, as his voice and actions seemed to imply. "If the head of this city is in communication with such

a Tory as Tryon, what may not follow?" he asked gravely. "Yet this is not all I learned in the dramshop. There is a plan on foot—what I know not; but certain it is that arrangements are being made by the Tories in New York to either murder or make prisoner of no less a personage than General Washington himself, and the three to whom I have been listening are actively engaged in the work."

I still gazed at him like a simple, while Sam, with more ready wit, seized upon the import and cried excitedly:

"Why did you leave them? You should have stayed until everything had been learned."

"So I would but that the time is passed when they can give any further information. The African, overcome by the effects of the rum in which he freely indulged, is asleep, and the white men are awaiting the coming of others in the conspiracy."

"Then they gave up the attempt to gain speech with those who were arrested?"

"The plan was evidently abandoned before they reached the dram shop. Perhaps some

friend was met as they walked up the street, who undertook that portion of the work. At all events, no mention was made of it from the time I entered, and now not a moment is to be lost. There is work to be done, and if it so chances we do it well, who shall say that instead of enlisting as privates, we may not receive commissions?"

I was yet in the dark as to the meaning of it all, but understood that it was little less than ridiculous for three boys who knew nothing of the art of war to expect to be made officers, and so expressed myself, when Thad replied as if it was folly to consider the words I had spoken:

"Of that we shall have ample time to talk. Now we must act."

"In what way?" I asked irritably. "You and Sam seem to have decided that these three drunken men may be able to harm General Washington, surrounded as he is by his officers and his troops, and talk about acting without having first explained what may be done."

"Even though General Washington is surrounded by his troops, there are traitors even

in the ranks, and mayhap more than one wears a sword. Wiser heads than yours or mine can best decide whether what I have heard be of importance, therefore, 'Liphalet, it is for you to go with all speed to your uncle, Colonel Willett; repeat to him what I have said; tell him I will keep the men in sight if it so be he desires to see them, and that done you shall come back to Dock Street, where Sam will be found."

It was in my mind that I would first go home and acquaint my mother with the business on hand, lest she be anxious because of my long delay; but Thad, as if reading my thoughts, said sharply:

"There is to be no delay in this work, 'Liphalet, even though your wise head may not believe it of importance. It must be done regardless of anything else, and rest you not a moment until after having had speech with Colonel Willett."

I realized at once that Thad Burr would not have spoken thus without believing he had good cause, and then suddenly came into my mind the thought that perhaps it might be possible we could render signal

service to the cause, and straightway I was like one in a fever, being consumed with the desire to speak with Uncle Marinus.

Running at full speed I went first to one place and then another, asking of every American soldier or officer whom I saw where the colonel might be found, and when it seemed as if I had spent hours upon the work, although my search had not lasted forty minutes, I halted, panting and breathless, in front of General Putnam's headquarters just as my uncle emerged therefrom.

My excitement was so great that for fully a moment it was impossible for me to tell a story which could be understood; but when he finally realized all I would have made known, his face paled suddenly as if he had been stricken a mortal blow.

Grasping my arm with such strength that I was forced to cry aloud from very pain, he asked, and the words seemed to come with difficulty from his lips:

"Are you certain your comrade can have made no mistake, Eliphalet?"

I told him it was Thad—Thad Burr—who followed the men, and he was a boy not

given to sudden excitement—one who ever kept his wits about him, and who could not well be mistaken in what he heard.

"And you say he is on Dock Street?"

"The men were in a dramshop over against Martin's warehouse beyond the fish market."

"Then get you back there, lad, and see to it that those three, drunken or sober, are not allowed to give you the slip. Remain with them even though the morning should come before you hear from me again, and at whatever hazard to you. In due time I, or some one sent by me, will relieve you from the duty."

He gave me no time to question him; but turned suddenly and ran as a boy might run into General Putnam's headquarters, while I, exultant now because of what Thad Burr had had the ready wit to do, turned to rejoin my comrades, thinking like the simple I always am that the work set us to do would be easy and unaccompanied by danger.

CHAPTER II.

A SURPRISE.

WHILE returning to the fish market, running as rapidly as was possible, I forgot that I felt only derision when Thad first proposed to learn the business these strangers had in hand, and set down to my own credit a full share in what had already been done, thereby puffing myself up with pride, remembering not that such feelings go before a fall.

My thoughts even went so far as to picture myself as able a soldier as my uncle had proven to be, and there was in my mind an idea that the slight part I had played must win rich recognition from those who were risking their lives in the cause of independence.

Then I met Sam Antill, who, standing on the corner of Dock Street, was awaiting my coming, and still swelling with pride I told him what my uncle had said, clothing the

order in such words of my own as made it appear as if I myself was directing the course of affairs.

Sam looked at me curiously a moment after I had ceased speaking, but made no reply, and his silence, together with the odd expression of his eyes, gave me an inkling of the foolish part I was trying to play.

Realizing how simple I must appear, I repeated Uncle Marinus' words more soberly, and my comrade said, with what was very like a chuckle of satisfaction:

"If there is any credit out of this affair, 'Liphalet, we can have but little part in it. Thad has already shown himself more of a man than you or I will be in many years."

"You are right, Sam, and I knew it even while acting the fool. But when I saw how important my uncle deemed the information brought by me, it seemed as if already we had done very much for the cause."

"It may be we have, but all through Thad, which should not cause us to be envious, for a truer comrade never lived, and we shall do well ever to follow his counsel. Yet even now I cannot believe any serious danger

menaces General Washington through such people as Thad has been watching; but Colonel Willett has set us a task, and it must be performed. We are to go back to the dramshop, and there wait till our comrade calls on us for further service."

Not only at that moment, but very many times since, has Sam Antill proven himself a lad of rare discretion, and in looking back upon the happenings of that day I am oftentimes at a loss to decide as to which of my two comrades should be given the greatest praise.

However, thoughts of mine have little to do with the story I am trying to tell and succeeding in so lamely, for all that we aided in doing during that week in June of '76 has now become a matter of history, and it is not well a humble soldier like myself, who can claim but little credit for the part he has played during the dark days which have followed, should give voice to his opinion.

Sam and I went back to the vicinity of the dramshop, and there waited with as little impatience as was possible fully half an hour before Thad showed himself.

Then he came slowly out as if having no especial purpose, looked quickly around until seeing us, and asked when we had joined him:

"Have you seen Colonel Willett?"

I told of the part I had played in this queer business, and he said hurriedly:

"It stands us three in hand to keep our wits with us, unless Colonel Willett comes or sends some one to take charge of the business. These fellows are about to depart, and we may not find it an easy matter to keep them in sight. They have been in conversation with two men, one of whom wears the uniform of an American soldier, and the other, if I mistake not, is in attendance upon no less a person than his excellency the mayor. The negro, whom I thought to be so thoroughly overcome by the drams he has taken, is now fully alive to all that happens around him, and from what has been said I believe some move is contemplated as soon as it shall be dark. I have loitered around so long that there is danger of exciting their suspicions, therefore it is better one or both of you go in while I stay outside to watch

for Colonel Willett. Note closely all they do, and try, so far as is possible without betraying your purpose, to hear what they may say among themselves."

Distrusting my own ability to continue the work begun by Thad, I looked at Sam as if to intimate he was the one to perform the task; but he was not minded to do so alone.

"Go you with me, 'Liphalet. The best both of us can do will not equal Thad's work, and I would he had thought it best to remain in attendance upon these fellows until your uncle or his messengers arrive."

Then, beckoning to me in a manner which was little less than a command, Sam entered the dramshop, I following close at his heels.

The three men whom we were to watch were seated at a small table in one corner of the room, from whence could be had a full view of all who entered or left the place, and to approach so closely without causing suspicion as to overhear any conversation they might indulge in seemed to me impossible.

There were many patrons in the shop, each intent on his own and his neighbor's business, but yet no one seemed to pay any par-

ticular attention to the three in the corner who were conversing little, and watching intently everything around them.

It seemed to me as if they must be able to discern by the expression on my face why I had come, and as if guilty of a crime, I partially concealed myself behind Sam.

"Don't act as if you had been caught stealing sheep," he whispered. "No one is giving any heed to us, even though we are boys and in a place where we have no business. We shall have little trouble in staying as long as Thad may wish, but I can't see that we are likely to be of any service."

It heartened me to hear him talking thus carelessly, and I looked around more at ease.

Step by step Sam moved nearer the corner where were seated the two white men and the African; but he must have understood as well as I that we could not approach within sound of their voices, save at a great risk of detection.

I doubt not that he would have tried it, however much the possible danger, for Sam Antill has even more courage than I lack; but while we were yet some distance from

those we had been enjoined to watch, the scene was changed.

Two visitors entered, looked quickly around, and, seeing the three in the corner, went directly toward them.

"That which we should hear is being said now," Sam whispered when the men began talking earnestly, and at the same moment he advanced several paces as if unconscious of what he did.

I followed his example, but before gaining his side the men arose suddenly and walked out of the shop at a rapid pace.

For the moment I felt relieved, doubting not that Thad was on guard and would take up the work he began despite our derision; but on gaining the street my heart sank, for our comrade was nowhere to be seen.

"He did not think there was any chance the fellows would leave so soon, and has run home to explain to his cousin why he may be absent," Sam whispered, quickening his pace lest in the fast-gathering darkness we should lose sight of those whom we had been ordered to follow.

"What is to be done?" I asked like the

simple that I was. "He cannot guess which way we have gone, and may not see us again till after much mischief has been done."

"It will be our fault if anything goes wrong now," my comrade replied sharply. "We must continue the work, and try to carry it on as he would have done."

It was not seemly in me to give my forebodings words when he was so brave, and in silence I followed close by his side, feeling certain our efforts would be in vain.

Those whom we would keep in view walked rapidly on until arriving at the meal market, when they turned sharply to the right toward the water.

Here we encountered a throng of citizens, and it became necessary to close up on those we were pursuing lest we lose sight of them entirely, and in so doing I made the fatal blunder which so nearly thwarted our purpose.

Hurrying forward through the press of people without due thought of caution, I ran full upon one of the three who had first entered the dramshop, and, turning, the man remembered my face.

I would have stepped back, hoping to hide myself amid the throng, but that he suddenly seized me by the collar with a grasp so firm that I was near to choking, and speaking not a word, forced me to walk by his side.

"What have you here?" one of his friends asked as if in surprise when I was thus unexpectedly brought in the midst of the party.

"An eavesdropper if I mistake not; it is the same lad I saw at the dramshop, and he overran me in his eagerness."

I would have cried aloud for Sam, but my captor tightened his grasp as if reading the purpose in my face, and said in a tone so low that those who were passing could not have heard:

"Make ever so little noise, and you are through with this world, for I shall wring your neck as I would a chicken's!"

There was no question in my mind but that he would carry out his threat to the letter, and now my terror was so great that I could not have cried out if I would.

My legs bent under me, and the man dragged me along by the neck until it was as if death itself clutched me.

One of the fellow's companions began to speak about a boat which should have been seen, and he checked him suddenly by saying:

"Not a word till we have disposed of this young cur! The matter has gone so far that it is our lives against every one of his ilk who has an idea of our purpose."

"What will you do with him?"

"Put a weight on his feet and drop him into the water."

"Here?"

"Why not? There is no good reason why we should keep him with us many minutes."

"There are too many near who might see; better carry him down the bay, where he can be taken care of without trouble to us."

My captor did not reply, but I understood from the yet further tightening of his grasp that he would prefer to finish me offhand rather than be put to ever so slight an inconvenience.

Indeed I had good cause to believe myself very near death.

If it was true, and I did not doubt it now, that these men were plotting to kill or cap-

ture General Washington, there could be no question they would let my life stand in their way, and, not knowing how much I had learned regarding their plans, must believe it necessary to put me past all power of doing them harm.

To have cried out then, even had the villain loosened his grasp, would have been impossible, so great was the terror upon me.

I knew dimly, as one does when half-asleep, that we approached the water until we stood at the very edge of the dock, and he who held my throat in so firm a grip pushed me to and fro as if with the intent to throw me over; my heart beat short and fast; I could breathe only with the greatest effort, and the thought was in my mind that death by drowning must be more easy than strangulation.

Suddenly my attention was diverted from my own dangerous position to a short, whispered conversation between the African and another, and, without having heard the words, I knew it was Sam of whom they spoke.

Then the black man shook hands with his

companions as if about to take his departure, and strolled carelessly away, the others giving no heed to his movements.

I turned my head as much as was permitted me, to gaze after him, but by this time the darkness was so great that I could not distinguish objects fifty yards away, and he was already swallowed up by the gloom.

"Are you certain there were but two?" one of the men asked, and he who held me by the collar replied:

"I saw no more; they must have overheard what you said on joining us, and have taken up the trade of spies on the impulse of the moment. But Ham will soon bag the second cub, and we need have no further concern regarding them, save to decide how and when they shall be put out of the way."

At this moment I fancied I heard a faint cry, and my captor said with a laugh:

"Ham has done his work quickly. You can now signal for the boat, and we'll be off."

This suggestion was acted upon at once, as I knew from the fact that the sound of oars could be heard a moment later, and the approaching boat had not yet come into view

when the African joined us, holding Sam as I was being held.

Now I understood the meaning of the conversation just held by the men, and there was no longer any hope in my mind that the plot against General Washington could be defeated.

Sam looked reproachfully at me, as if believing I might have warned him in time to prevent capture, and I could not reply to the mute accusation because I was being forced over the edge of the dock into the boat which had just arrived.

My comrade was sent down immediately after me, and for the instant I believed we might regain our freedom by leaping overboard, since both of us were in the bow of the craft unfettered; but this hope of escape was soon quenched.

The black man took it upon himself to attend to us, and following Sam, leaped directly upon us, pinning both Sam and myself to the bottom of the boat by his great weight.

So severe was the pain that I believed some of my bones had been broken by the

brute, and when I would have cried out he struck me across the mouth with such force that blood followed the blow.

Observing the treatment dealt out to me, and knowing he would receive the same if the slightest provocation was offered, Sam remained silent, but there was an expression in his eyes which told what he would do if the time ever came when he might settle accounts.

Thus, serving as cushions for the African, we remained silent, suffering most severe pain, while the men first pulled the boat up toward Catherine Street as if intending only to visit the waste lands beyond, and after having passed from view of those standing near where we had embarked, rowed toward the Brooklyn shore.

I was positive that once we were so far in the stream as to be hidden from those on shore, Sam's fate and mine would quickly be settled; but in this I was mistaken, as is proven from the fact that we are yet alive.

Our captors rowed on in silence during what appeared like many hours to us, and when it seemed impossible I could longer en-

dure the pain inflicted by the brutal African, the boat came alongside a ship.

I now knew we were among Lord Howe's fleet, and my relief of mind was great, for it could not be he would sanction a cold-blooded murder, whatever might be the purpose of the plot.

Even now we were forced to remain crouching under the black man's feet until the ship had been hailed, and a request made for an interview with his excellency, Governor Tryon.

Ten minutes later, after two of the party had been allowed to go on board, some pieces of rope were thrown to the African, and with them he proceeded to bind us hand and foot, threatening as he did so to blow our brains out if we made ever so slight an appeal for help.

Then we were left alone in the boat, and instantly it was possible for us to speak without danger of being overheard, Sam whispered:

"Are you willing to take the chances of trying to hail the officers of the ship?"

"To what end?" I asked.

"They will force these fellows to release us, or at the worst, take us on board as prisoners. Anything is better than what we may expect from the negro and his friends."

"If there really is a plot to capture General Washington we should get little aid from the British, although I do not believe Lord Howe himself would agree to our murder. But we shall never be able to summon him, and by making an outcry only increase our suffering, even though the African does not carry out his threat."

"It is the same as assisting at our own death, to remain here silent."

I knew Sam's words were true, yet at the same time I did not believe it wise to do as he suggested, therefore held my peace.

"Once the business here is finished we can count on their murdering us, for it is not reasonable to suppose those fellows will dare let us go back to New York."

"We shall be no worse off by waiting for a time," I replied after trying in vain to see some way out of our trouble, but yet I could not have explained how I hoped we might be benefited.

Sam fell silent for many moments, and then broke out into reproaches because of having been so careless as to allow himself to be made a prisoner without a struggle, and since all this included me, I insisted strongly that we had done our best; that the capture was but the fortune of war, although even as I spoke I realized how foolish were my words.

We had failed in the duty intrusted us—of that there could be no question—and whatever should befall us was the price of our own heedlessness.

But neither reproaches nor wailing could avail us now, and after a short time both realized this, for we ceased to talk, and each busied himself with his own thoughts, which, as can well be imagined, were far from cheerful.

Then, when it seemed as if they had been absent half the night, our captors returned to the boat, all evidently well-pleased with the result of their visit.

So far as we could see or hear, no one attended them to the rail of the ship; they were allowed to sneak over the side alone,

and the murderous traitors were so engrossed with their own wickedness as to apparently have no thought regarding this refusal of the British to treat them as equals.

Pushing off from the war vessel, four of the party plied the oars, and since the African was one of these we were not forced to endure his ill-treatment.

The men were in high spirits, and talked, without mentioning any names, as if there could be no question as to the certainty of carrying out their vile plot.

They spoke as if some one high in authority in the city was implicated with them, and that now there was but little danger to any one concerned save him whose life or liberty was sought.

Each moment I expected to hear them raise the question of what should be done with Sam and I; but yet no word bearing on the subject was uttered; it was as if they had already decided our fate among themselves.

The fact that they talked so unguardedly before us told that our doom was settled in their minds at least, and I had no doubt but

that death would come to us before the voyage was ended.

When we had made half the distance from Staten Island to the city, I heard the sound of oars evidently but a short distance away, yet gave little heed to the fact, for there seemed no hope we could find assistance now.

A few moments later our captors also heard the noise, and in whispers called each other's attention to the fact.

The boat was turned sharply to starboard, and the oarsmen made every effort to row silently, but yet the faint splashing of water could still be heard.

Our enemies bent all their strength to the task, pulling vigorously ten minutes or more, but when they stopped to listen the same sounds betokened pursuit, and I fancied them nearer than before, despite the efforts made by those in our craft.

"There's no question about it," one of the fellows said as if in reply to some remark, although none had been made. "We are followed, and all know only too well what the result will be if we are taken. The fact that

we visited the British fleet is enough to condemn us, even though nothing more be known."

My heart was beating so loudly with the excitement of hope and the thought that friends had not deserted us, that it seemed as if the scoundrels must hear it, and I had almost as much difficulty in breathing as when the man clutched me by the throat.

Those who had it in their hearts to murder General Washington, and in the commission of that crime would not allow the lives of two boys to stand in the way, were rowing with all their strength, and yet I could still hear close in the rear those sounds which told of pursuit.

I believed Thad Burr to be near at hand, and nothing save the knowledge that I would probably be killed instantly the first cry escaped my lips, prevented me from shouting to my true-hearted comrade.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAUGHING MARY.

SAM was not one whit less excited than myself.

He also had heard the welcome sounds which told that the villains were being pursued, and understood equally well with me that those who were enemies to these traitors must necessarily be our friends.

Were I to set down here all the thoughts which came into my mind during the remainder of the chase this record would contain little else, for it seemed as if I lived again my entire life.

At one moment I was positive the traitors must speedily be overtaken, and at another, hope grew so faint that the time when we would be murdered seemed near at hand, and I fancied the pursuers, whoever they might be, could not end the chase until after Sam's fate and mine had been decided.

SUDDENLY A SHARP REPORT OF A MUSKET RANG OUT, FOLLOWED BY A CRY OF PAIN FROM ONE OF THE OARSMEN.

Laughing Mary, p. 41.

My comrade was in the same fever of alternate hope and fear as myself.

Now he would whisper that the race was well-nigh ended, and again question if those in the unseen boat were really pursuing our captors.

But for the fact that the other craft was so near at hand, I believed of a verity we would have been flung overboard shortly after the chase began; but the scoundrels who plotted against their country were so closely pressed that they dared not waste even as much time as would be necessary to dispatch us.

Save for the grinding of oars in the rowlocks and the gurgling of the water forced up by the prow of the boat, a profound silence reigned over the bay, when suddenly the sharp report of a musket rang out, followed by a cry of pain from one of the oarsmen, and my heart leaped up exultantly.

The end was near at hand; the pursuers had given token of their determination.

By the falling of one of their companions our captors were thrown into momentary confusion, and this was sufficient to decide the issue.

One could not have counted twenty after the report of the weapon before the second craft lay alongside of ours, and in the gloom were seen the barrels of half a dozen leveled muskets as a voice which I recognized to be my uncle's cried sternly:

"Surrender, or we shall open fire!"

That the conspirators were cowards was shown instantly these words had been spoken, for as if with one voice they cried out that no resistance would be made.

Then the two boats came together, rail to rail; there was a time of seeming confusion, during which the conspirators were being manacled, while Sam and I alternately laughed and shouted as crazy boys might have done.

In the joy and excitement I attempted to leap to my feet, forgetting for the instant the bonds which confined my limbs, and before the pain caused by this effort had ceased Thad Burr was unfastening the ropes.

It was not until the conspirators had been securely ironed, and the boats were being pulled back to the city in company by the soldiers under my uncle's command, that

Sam and I were sufficiently calm to understand what Thad was trying to tell us.

Twice he began the story, and twice did we interrupt him with our exclamations of joy and relief at what was nothing less than an escape from death; but when for the third time he commenced the recital, we were sufficiently calm to understand his words.

"Colonel Willett, accompanied by eight men, had just come around the market when these fellows," and Thad motioned toward the discomfited prisoners who were packed in the bottom of the boat like fish in a box, "left the dramshop. Knowing you would keep them in sight, we had nothing more difficult to do than follow, which allowed us to remain so far behind that there was little danger of our detection."

"Then you must have seen us when 'Liphalet and I were captured," Sam interrupted.

"So we did."

"And yet made no effort to prevent it?"

"But for Colonel Willett I might have been so foolish as to have made the attempt, and thereby worked much mischief."

"In what way?" I asked in perplexity.

"Knowing as little as we did regarding the plot, it was necessary some proof should be had, and this was only obtained by allowing the men to go wherever they would. To pursue them in a boat and yet remain undetected was not difficult in the darkness."

"But they might have murdered us offhand, as at one time seemed probable," Sam said reproachfully.

"I had thought of such a possibility and made mention of it to Colonel Willett; but he would not change his plan. 'Even though they were both my sons, I would take the chances of harm coming to them rather than risk a failure in the unraveling of the plot,' he said, and after that it would have been folly for me to have argued further. I could only hope if serious danger threatened we might arrive in time to avert it; but very often, and especially while they were on board the frigate, did I fear that in this attempt to aid the cause I had in a certain way compassed the death of my comrades."

Then silence fell upon us three for a time, during which we realized as never before of

how little value human life may be in the game of war.

"We dared not lay so near the British vessel that we could see what was being done by those scoundrels," Thad continued, "lest we ourselves be discovered, and even after they pushed off I was filled with doubt as to whether you yet remained on board the boat. Orders had been given that not a word be spoken by those in our craft, therefore I could not give utterance to the fears which beset me until after the fire had been opened upon the conspirators, when we heard your voices."

During the remainder of the voyage to the city we three found much to talk about, although but little had occurred, for Sam and I had really come back through the dark valley where death seemed very near unto us, and it was to me at least as if we were reunited after a long separation.

It was midnight when we arrived at Peck's Slip, and I ventured to ask my uncle privately why we had landed so far up the harbor.

"That everything connected with this night's work may be kept a secret so far as

is possible," he replied, "and I am commanded to enjoin upon you who have rendered such signal service this night to the cause, to refrain from so much as telling your mothers what has occurred."

"But if we have made prisoners of those who would have harmed General Washington, why should it not be told?" I asked foolishly, for it was never my way to reflect long before speaking.

"It must not be known that there are men calling themselves Americans who would enter into such a plot," my uncle replied. "It would hearten those among us who are not in full sympathy with the cause to work mischief if an opportunity presented itself. Therefore keep watch upon your tongues, lads, and to-morrow morning come to General Putnam's headquarters. I doubt not you are minded to serve your country yet further, and for this night's work you shall be given a fairer opening than could be had through a recruiting officer."

Having said this Uncle Marinus—here I am resolved to give him his proper title henceforth, Colonel Willett—gave his commands to

the squad in a low tone, and the soldiers with their prisoners walked rapidly away, leaving us three standing on the slip like lads bewildered, for the words of caution spoken had caused us a feeling very near akin to fear.

I, simple like, would have discussed with my comrades the happenings of the afternoon and night but that Thad checked me.

"If we speak not of it among ourselves we shall be less liable to disobey the colonel's commands," he said decidedly. "Of course we would relish letting our friends know what we have done this night for the good of the cause; but the injunction of secrecy is laid upon us, and that is all we need care to know. To-morrow, if I mistake not, we shall have an opportunity of doing that which has often been talked of between us, but never accomplished, and I'm not certain that the time is far distant when we shall wear swords."

As we walked toward our homes, for all three lived in the same neighborhood, many plans which now seem extravagantly foolish were formed, and when I entered my home

I was in such a whirl of excitement that at my mother's first anxious questions I nearly betrayed the secret which we had been commanded to keep.

Collecting my senses in time, however, I replied to her that we had been engaged under Colonel Willett; but could not, because of his commands, explain what had been done.

This was sufficient for the dear soul, who had every confidence in my word, and I forebore telling her that on the morrow we three comrades were to become soldiers, for there was no reason why she should have any more hours of anxiety than was absolutely necessary.

Of the conversation between my mother and myself on the following morning I refrain from speaking. It is not necessary to the purpose of this record, and even at this day is too painful for me to write out in words.

It is sufficient to say that I met Sam and Thad at the rendezvous decided upon the evening previous, and together we went to General Putnam's headquarters, marching

through the streets with what we believed to be a true military air, for just then, in our own minds at least, we were not only soldiers in the American army, but very nearly officers.

I was so foolish as to be disappointed by the manner in which Colonel Willett received us when we presented ourselves, and, as they afterward told me, my companions shared this feeling, though perhaps not to so great an extent.

I do not know with what ceremony I expected to be treated, but surely thought after the events of the previous night that we would be considered as of more consequence than three boys who were willing to devote all their energies and perhaps their lives to the cause of independence. I may have fancied General Putnam would meet us with open arms, but certain it is I felt sore, when, after cooling our heels at the door an hour or more, we were ushered into Colonel Willett's presence, and he said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"So you are the lads who desire to enter the continental service?"

My mouth opened in surprise at this poor greeting, and the question might have remained unanswered but for Thad, who, always quick-witted, as will be seen if this record is ever finished, replied that we had come for the purpose of enlisting.

"But for the fact that one of your number is the son of my brother, I would propose that you join my regiment."

"And why should we not, Uncle Marinus?" I asked.

"I must be Colonel Willett to you, Elipha-let, if you enter the army, and hard though I should strive to prevent showing any partiality because of the kinship, there would likely be those in the ranks who might accuse me of doing for my brother's son more than I would for a stranger, therefore it is best you enlist under some other commander. I have thought the matter over since last night, and conclude that perhaps you will be better pleased to serve under Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Tupper, who has command of what we call the fleet, although it is composed of but little save whaleboats, galleys and small sloops. Colonel Tupper is a par-

ticular friend of mine, and can do for you what would not be seemly in me. How say you, lads? Would you be suited in that portion of the army?"

"We shall be pleased to do whatever you may suggest, sir," Thad replied, and without further parley Colonel Willett took from his pocket a sealed packet which he handed to me as he said:

"This will serve to introduce you to Colonel Tupper, who, if I am not mistaken, may be found at the fort. Before enlisting with him it will be well you understand fully the duties which are required, that there may be no cause on your part for regret. Should it so chance that the proposition he makes be not acceptable, return to me, and I will see what further can be done."

Then Colonel Willett would have dismissed us with a stiff military salute; but I, presuming upon my kinship, had the boldness to refuse an immediate dismissal, and asked:

"What is to be done with those men whom we captured last night?"

"If I was willing to admit that you knew

of anything important which occurred last evening, I should reply by saying that the plans of the commanding general did not concern a private soldier; but as I understand the matter, you know of nothing that might interest either you or me."

Heavy-witted as I am and probably always shall be, I stared at Colonel Willett in open-mouthed astonishment, and might have remained there like a stupid until he was forced to call some one to take me away, but for Thad, who after thanking him for his kindness in giving us an introduction to Colonel Tupper, actually dragged me out of the room, saying with no little sharpness when we were on the street:

"Can you not understand that if what occurred yesterday is to be kept a secret, there must be no conversation regarding it? It is fortunate Colonel Willett is your kinsman, otherwise we might have been read a decidedly unpleasant lecture."

Finally I succeeded in getting through my head the meaning of this latter portion of our interview, and by that time we had arrived at the fort, where we sent in to Colonel Tup-

per, through the officer of the day, our letter of introduction.

Not until fully half an hour had passed did we see the officer to whom we had been sent, but once hearing him speak I was satisfied he would prove such a commander as we should be pleased to serve under.

"I understand," he said, holding the open letter in his hand as if to intimate that from it he had gathered the information, "Colonel Willett feels under a certain sense of obligation to you lads for some work done in the past, and to such end proposes you shall choose your own manner of serving the cause. I doubt not it will be possible for me to gratify you, although at the outset you must know that the opportunities for gaining distinction will be few while under my command. Our fleet is composed of nothing more formidable than such harbor craft as you are familiar with, and the greater number of them are small, open boats. Perhaps it is fortunate for you that on this morning a friend of the cause presented the government with a schooner of thirty tons, to which vessel no crew has yet been drafted. Would it

serve your purpose if I should put you three lads in command of her?"

Would it serve our purpose? To be placed in command of a schooner, when we had thought we must march and countermarch until our legs were like to drop off from hard usage, was something which promised even better to our minds than the wearing of a sword.

What reply we actually made to Colonel Tupper I am unable to set down, remembering only that I for one was almost extravagant in trying to thank the gentleman for the opportunity he offered.

Of course Thad made the proper answer, and in a proper fashion, for when I next was in possession of my full senses we were marching past the fort to the water front at the head of a squad of soldiers, on our way to take command of a trim little vessel which lay at anchor a short distance from the shore.

To explain all we did in getting our vessel ready for service would not only take up too great space, but become tiresome in the telling, therefore I shall speak but little of the

work lest I crowd more important matters from this record.

We signed the rolls as recruits, and were at once drafted to take command of the schooner Laughing Mary, each being equal in rank, since we believed ourselves privates.

We decided Thad should be the captain, Sam the first mate and I the second. If we needed assistance in handling her those who should be sent as guard could form a crew, but we hoped most sincerely we might be able to work the little craft unaided.

Inexperienced boys as we were, there was in our minds the idea that we would be required to sail the schooner here and there as messengers rather than belligerents, and because of her small size as compared with the British war vessels it never entered into our calculations that we should be called upon to do any fighting while on board.

Before nightfall on the first day of our taking possession the supply of provisions was sent on board, and with them a yellow-faced man who claimed to have been engaged as the cook. From his appearance one would have said he had spent his days rolling pills

in the office of some doctor, rather than in the kitchen where wholesome food should have been found.

The six soldiers who accompanied us on the first visit to the schooner remained, by Colonel Tupper's orders, as guard, and for lack of other accommodations were quartered aft with us, Thad promising meanwhile that bunks should soon be built in the hold in order that we officers of the vessel might have at least room in which to turn around, as was not the case when nine people—the cook slept forward in the galley—were forced to occupy the tiny cabin.

On the day after our coming on board we were notified to haul into the dock in front of the fort to receive two small cannon and a supply of ammunition, together with such weapons as might be needed for the defense of the vessel.

All this had very much the look of war to us, and when the Laughing Mary was at her anchorage again Sam and I paced the deck in such solemn fashion as we fancied should be assumed by officers of the navy, while Thad stalked here and there trying to look

extremely dignified, but uncertain as to exactly how it should be done.

We three were by no means indifferent seamen, and I say so without intending to boast of our accomplishments, but because there is none other to set down the fact, and I would not it should appear we were green hands at the business we had undertaken.

Perhaps Colonel Tupper may have feared after giving us command of the Laughing Mary that he had intrusted her to three boys who could not even have managed a punt, and perhaps also it was for this reason that on the third day he came aboard ordering us to get under way for a reconnoissance of the bay.

"I want to see what you can do with your vessel, lads, and propose to combine business with instruction. We will run down to the British fleet as near as may be safe, and then back; after which you will be better able to say how much of a crew is necessary."

"I doubt not, sir, but that some, if not all, the soldiers aboard know how to sail a vessel, and would give us such assistance as we might need," Thad said gravely. "Under

ordinary circumstances we should be able to handle her to your satisfaction."

Colonel Tupper made no reply to this speech; but I observed that he watched us narrowly as we got the Laughing Mary under way, and whispered to Sam that if we wished to make a good impression upon our commanding officer, it stood us in hand to move around right lively.

Thad gave his orders in a loud, imperative tone; but he was careful to bear a hand when we weighed anchor or made sail, knowing full well that Sam and I could not unaided have done all the work.

The Laughing Mary was as neat a little craft as ever left a builder's hands. She behaved like a lady, and handled as readily as a fifteen-foot wherry.

It was necessary to make several tacks in order to round Governor's Island, and when she came up into the wind it was only while one might have counted five that she stood motionless, and then filling again, went on the other tack like a bird, wasting not a single second of time in the maneuver.

We made the reconnoissance—that is to

say, we approached the British fleet at a respectful distance, and then coming about, stood up the harbor with a free wind and such a bone in the teeth of the Laughing Mary as told eloquently of her sailing qualities.

"Well," Colonel Tupper said as we approached the anchorage, "if you boys are not satisfied with this craft I can only say that you are extremely difficult to please."

"We are more than satisfied with her, sir," Thad replied. "Who could be otherwise? I will engage to run around the best ship Lord Howe has in his fleet, and as for their catching us, sir, it can't be done unless the Laughing Mary is first disabled. I only hope there may be such demand for our service as shall enable us to show what she can do."

"As to that you need have no fear, my lad. From this time forward I guarantee your time will be fully occupied, and doubt not from what I have heard regarding you three but that the service required will be performed in proper fashion."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST INDEPENDENCE DAY.

MANY times during the week which followed our taking command of the schooner Laughing Mary did my comrades and I congratulate ourselves upon the very pleasant manner in which we were serving the cause.

The idea in our minds had been, when we talked of enlisting, that we must suffer many hardships, endure privations, and so to speak, remain constantly in fear of death.

Now, however, had we decided to devote the time wholly to our own amusement we could not have arranged matters more satisfactorily.

The fact that we were under command of the officers of the army only served to make the pleasure greater, since it relieved us of all responsibility, and when we were sent up the North River with messages, or went into the bay reconnoitering the enemy, it was for

us no more than a pleasure trip, therefore we flattered ourselves that the hardships of war had been greatly exaggerated.

It is needless to say that after a time we discovered our mistake.

During this week we had kept our eyes open for news regarding the conspirators who had been made prisoners; but could learn nothing.

It can well be supposed that we did not venture to ask Colonel Willett or Colonel Tupper questions bearing on the matter, and it is hardly likely we should have gained anything by so doing.

The men passed from our knowledge as absolutely as if they were sunk beneath the waters of the bay, and we came to the conclusion that nothing more would be heard regarding them, at least not until the war was ended.

Then came the 12th of July, when we were made to realize that Lord Howe did not intend to remain quietly at anchor in the Narrows.

The Laughing Mary's anchorage was a short distance to the left of the fort, and about two hundred yards from the shore.

On this particular morning my comrades and I were lounging about the deck under a bit of canvas we had spread as an awning to shield us from the intense heat of the sun, when two or three of the boats belonging to our fleet, which had been cruising near Governor's Island, were pulled toward the city with all possible speed, and we were suddenly startled from our idleness by warning cries.

I was yet staring stupidly around me, wondering what could have caused the sudden commotion, when I saw standing up past the island the frigates Rose and Phœnix, all sail set, and their decks cleared for action.

My first thought was that the British were about to attack our city, and yet I remained in my tracks like a blockhead as if I had nothing to do, until Thad's voice, ringing out sharp and distinct, aroused me to a sense of the fact that I had some duty to perform.

To have heard the captain of the Laughing Mary at that moment one would have said of a verity he had had long experience in naval affairs, for I am certain Lord Howe himself could not have made more prompt or better

arrangements for defense than did Thad Burr in the short time which intervened before the frigates opened fire upon the fort.

The tide ceased ebbing, and the Laughing Mary was lying with her head toward the fort. The two cannon had been placed amidships, one on either side, no very dangerous implements of war, to be sure, but still our only means of defense at long range, and without loss of time Thad shouted for the soldiers to wheel the starboard gun over to the larboard side.

Then, without waiting to see if his command was obeyed, he darted into the hold where was stowed our small stock of ammunition, returning to the deck with powder and shot by the time both guns were in position.

I must have cut a sorry figure in the wild scramble which ensued, for we had had no practice in such work, and it was really hardly better than a scramble as we charged the guns, got our cables over the starboard rail aft to hold the Laughing Mary in position, and otherwise prepared for the expected attack.

I seemed like one in a dream while these things were being done, but was speedily aroused to due realization of the situation when the foremost frigate—the Rose—yawed slightly and opened fire with her bow upon the fort, one of the iron missiles passing just abaft the Laughing Mary's foremast, and within ten feet of the deck.

It was our first experience in work of this kind, and I am free to confess not a pleasant one to me.

I was yet wondering whether the second shot would end my life, for it seemed as if the guns were trained directly upon me, when the weapons of the fort belched forth their reply, and Thad himself discharged our two cannon.

The din was like to stun one; the smoke enveloped us as in a cloud; the odor of burning powder was pungent in our nostrils, and straightway there came upon me a most intense desire to work injury to the arrogant Britishers, who dared try to kill us because we were defending a country which was ours by right of birth.

It needed not Thad's shouts of command to stimulate me to action, as I darted here

and there doing many useless things, and perhaps never a proper one; forgetting danger—eager only to destroy—conscious of nothing save the single desire, until the action was over.

The frigates had passed the fortifications, and were in the North River above the city where they could menace us from the rear.

When the tumult was hushed I became more frightened than at the moment the first shot screamed above my head.

It seemed impossible those two huge vessels of war had fired broadside after broadside directly upon us without killing all hands, and during several moments I was assailed by such terror as caused me to tremble and shake like one in an ague fit.

Among the guard on board was a soldier who had been in the army during the siege of Boston, and therefore had had much experience in such matters.

He treated the whole affair as something of so trifling a nature as not to be worthy of more than passing attention, declaring that before the summer was ended we would cease to think of this ten-minute action as

anything deserving the name of an engagement, and otherwise making such light of the matter as to shame me into soon getting the better of my fears.

This incident, however unpleasant at the moment, served us a good turn, for until it occurred no one, not even Thad, had seemed to think it necessary we should be constantly in a position of defense; but from that hour we ceased not to practice and drill ourselves for a like emergency.

On the second day after the Britishers thus reminded us they were ready for mischief, and while Thad was drilling his officers and crew in a most energetic fashion, a message came from Colonel Tupper's headquarters in the name of General Putnam, commanding us to appear at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon before a military court assembled at Captain Kennedy's mansion.

Nothing could have occurred to plunge us in more consternation than this order, and while making ready to obey by furbishing ourselves up in proper fashion, we speculated nervously as to the reason for the summons.

"In some way we neglected our duty when

the frigates passed the fort," Sam said in the tone of one who is confident he has solved a difficult problem. "Of course we are to be brought before the court because of carelessness, and the only time when anything of the kind might be charged against us was while the British were sailing past."

"But what could we have done more than we did?" Thad asked mournfully, for he believed as I did that we were about to lose the snug berth which Colonel Willett's influence had obtained for us.

"That is a question I cannot answer," Sam replied. "I only know that on no other occasion since we've been in command of the Laughing Mary could there have been an opportunity to find fault."

"But we did the best we could, and I am sure if Thad failed in his duty it was because of ignorance, not carelessness," I hastened to add, and both my comrades laughed in a mirthless sort of fashion because I should believe ignorance would be any excuse in such a case.

Whatever had been done, or left undone, however, would not be mended by our dis-

cussion, and after racking our brains in vain for a better solution of the riddle we accepted Sam's surmise as the truth, setting out with heavy hearts for the meeting place of the court.

The sergeant in command of the squad was left in charge of the schooner, and the two men who rowed us ashore were instructed to return at once to the Laughing Mary in order that her full force of defenders might be on board during our absence.

Arriving at General Putnam's headquarters we were admitted only after our names had been sent in by the sentinel on duty, and were at once ushered into the library of the house, where, seated around a long table, were half a dozen or more officers, all of whom, with the exception of Colonel Tupper, were strangers to us.

I confess to quaking with fear during the few moments we stood silent and motionless before these stern-visaged men, for there was in my mind the thought that we must have committed some exceedingly grave offense, otherwise so many high in rank would not have been gathered to pass judgment upon us.

Fortunately for my own peace of mind, however, we were not long kept in suspense, and at the first question from Colonel Tupper a great feeling of relief came over me, for I understood that this summons to the military court was not because of any neglect on our part.

"Sergeant Thaddeus Burr," Colonel Tupper began gravely, and I saw a flush mantle Thad's cheek as he was thus addressed, for until this moment we had no idea we were of higher rank than privates in the army—"Sergeant Thaddeus Burr, you will tell in detail all that occurred on the afternoon when you heard certain men talking together about a plot against General Washington."

Then Thad was sworn to tell only the truth, but an oath was not necessary, for my comrade scorned a lie as he did a Tory, after which he repeated what I have already set down. Then Sam and I told of the part we had played, both before and while we were the prisoners of the conspirators, and this done we were dismissed with an intimation that we might return to our post of duty on board the schooner.

That was all we had to do in the matter, and later in the day we learned that the prisoners had really been on trial, although we saw them not.

In the evening when Thad went to the fort in response to a summons from the commandant concerning some duty to be performed on the following day, he heard that the conspirators had been found guilty; that the mayor of New York was committed to jail like a common malefactor, and a soldier, one of General Washington's own guards, was to be hanged as a traitor on the following morning in that field near the Boston road where twice before I had seen a gallows erected.

Even now the seal of secrecy regarding the events of that afternoon and evening when we won our way to the command of the Laughing Mary through Thad's quick-wittedness was not removed from our lips, for a message was brought to me during the evening addressed to "Corporal Eliphalet Willett," and signed by Colonel Marinus Willett, which had these lines for its contents:

"Sergeant Burr and Corporals Antill and Willett are hereby notified that the good of the cause demands they shall affect to know nothing concerning a certain plot against an officer high in command in the American army, even though the findings of the court have been made public. They are also enjoined against attending the execution tomorrow morning, lest curious citizens should question them too closely."

We speculated, my comrades and I, upon this, to us, odd injunction, and could only arrive at the conclusion that it was desired to keep from the public the disgraceful fact that among our people could be found those so base as to join in such a plot.

These speculations were not prolonged as they otherwise would have been, because of the fact that we had been addressed severally as sergeant and corporals, which also had been done while we were at the military court.

That Colonel Willett should thus plainly write out our names with rank attached, seemed sufficient evidence that we had without our knowledge risen thus far in the serv-

ice, and I for one said to myself if promotion was to be gained so readily, before a year had passed I would of a truth be wearing a sword.

It must not be supposed that during these days of which I am writing we of New York looked upon Lord Howe's fleet as harmless visitors, who, being amused thus in the lower bay, would depart without any attempt at working us harm.

On the contrary, we who espoused the cause knew beyond a question that the king's admiral would do all in his power to force upon us the yoke from which we were trying to free ourselves, as was shown when the Rose and the Phœnix darted past the city in order to take up a position from which they might better harass us.

The Tories believed that in due time my Lord Howe would not only take possession of the city with but little difficulty, but that he would punish in a most summary manner all who had committed any act as against the authority of the king.

We all understood that his lordship remained thus quietly at Staten Island only

until he should be joined by his brother, General Howe, when there could be no question but that we must fight, and fight valiantly for the rights we claimed.

That morning when the traitorous American who would have delivered his general into the hands of the enemy was executed, my comrades and myself remained quietly on board the Laughing Mary, nor did we so much as question any of the loungers regarding what had taken place, when we went on shore in the evening.

But for the fact that the people had better topics of conversation than the hanging of a traitor, we should probably have been made acquainted with the facts of the morning by giving heed to the conversation among the citizens who gathered near the fort to receive the benefit of the cooling breezes.

As it was, however, we heard more regarding what the Continental Congress was doing than of the wretch who had met with a shameful but merited death.

On the fourth day of July twelve of the colonies had adopted an Act of Independence, so manly and vigorous in its tone that there

could be no question in the mind of his majesty but that it was our determination to become free, and we of the city were feverishly eager to know if this same Declaration was to be adopted by New York.

We had to content ourselves in patience twenty-four hours before the result was learned.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of the ninth, Colonel Tupper, who had come down the water front in an eight-oared galley, drew up alongside the Laughing Mary, and said in a tone as friendly as if he had been addressing his own comrades:

"My lads, I think you can safely trust the schooner to the care of the guard for an hour this afternoon, in order to come up on the Common, where an official copy of our Declaration of Independence is to be read. The commander-in-chief himself is to be present, and you may witness such a scene as will be well worth the remembering."

"Has it been adopted by New York, sir?" Thad asked eagerly, for we had not been ashore since morning.

"Not yet; but there is little question as to the fact soon being accomplished."

Colonel Tupper was rowed away after having thus spoken, and we, meaning my comrades and myself, set about making ourselves as smart as possible for the occasion.

Except when we had been summoned to the military court, the three of us had not been on shore together from the day we took command of the Laughing Mary, and we were resolved we would do credit to the little vessel.

Sam's mother and mine had made three uniforms of buff and blue like unto the one worn by Colonel Willett, save that ours were befitting privates, and therefore it was that in our opinion at least we did not present a mean appearance, when, having been rowed ashore by two of the guard, we marched three abreast up Broadway to the Common.

It was as if all the citizens loyal to the cause were in the streets, and such a merry-making day has not been my good fortune to see, save nine days later when there was a public reading of the Declaration in front of the city hall.

We saw the general from Virginia who will, if any man can, lead our people on to victory, as he set his horse within the hollow square formed by the brigade, while Colonel Willett read in a voice which might have been heard a hundred yards away, that writing by which we declared our right to govern ourselves.

This done three cheers were given, and given with a will, while from the city could be heard the ringing of bells and firing of guns, making it altogether one of the most inspiring scenes which can well be imagined.

Coming from the Common in the rear of the troops we found that the leaden statue of George III. on Bowling Green, placed there in the year '70, had been pulled down, and it was already in an ox cart being drawn, so some of the bystanders said, into Connecticut, where I afterward heard it was run into bullets, with which we peppered the redcoats, as I have no doubt.

In order to fitly celebrate the day, as Thad suggested, we invited Sam's mother and mine, and Thad's cousin, with whom he had

been living, on board the schooner to partake of as good cheer as our unwholesome-faced cook could prepare.

On the following morning the soldiers who went on shore for provisions came back with the pleasing intelligence that a message had been sent to the New York delegates in Congress, empowering them to vote for the Act of Independence, and ordering that a public reading of the document should be had at city hall, almost within reach of the British guns.

Little did we think then as we rejoiced at the spirit displayed by our lawmakers that so many signal reverses would come to us during the remainder of this year; but now that we have lately shown our mettle in rather a better fashion, it is talked about here at Morristown that on the fourth day of next July we will celebrate what was done last July, if it so be we still hold possession of any part of the United States.

Nothing occurred of sufficient importance to warrant my setting it down in this record from the time we heard the Act of Independence read on the common until we gathered

with—I was near to say every inhabitant in the city of New York, for so it seemed at the time; but it is reasonable to suppose a goodly number of Tories remained away from the festivities, a vast assemblage on Wall Street, and heard for the second time those words which make, simply by the hearing of them, brave men out of cowards.

For thirty days after this grand celebration we of the Laughing Mary had as much work on hand as we could well perform. There were reconnoissances to be made, troops to be carried to Brooklyn, where were building many strong fortifications, and much moving to and fro between the city and Governor's Island, which was garrisoned by the heroes of Bunker Hill under command of Colonel Prescott.

We had no idle time at our disposal, but yet to set down in detail all that which we did would be dry and uninteresting reading, therefore it has been decided between my comrades and myself that now having explained how we three, the oldest but seventeen years of age, chanced to be in command of the schooner Laughing Mary, this record

shall be devoted entirely to the doings which came to our share from the day when General Washington knew the British forces were about to make an attack.

CHAPTER V.

MUTINOUS CONDUCT.

On the morning of the 21st of August Sergeant Burr, captain of the schooner Laughing Mary, received orders from Colonel Tupper to pull in at a particular place near the Grand Battery, and there take on a certain amount of ammunition to be delivered to Colonel Prescott on Governor's Island.

The order was similar to many we had received since being in command of the schooner, and one not calculated to cause either my companions or myself any excitement.

It was a common freighting job, rather than sailoring, in the doing of which we three would be forced to perform a very large share of the work, for the soldiers on board had more than once during the past thirty days complained so loudly we could not fail to hear them, against what they called the

"unjustice" of being placed under the command of boys.

Had it not been for this complaint neither Thad, Sam nor I would have considered ourselves very well acquainted with the soldiers.

Since the hold had been fitted up for their better accommodation, the captain and mates of the Laughing Mary bunked alone in the cabin, perhaps living more by themselves than was right because of the discontent among the squad from the first day we took command.

There were five privates and one corporal, which last counted for half a dozen men, so far as peevishness and ill-temper were concerned.

Jethro Barnes was his name, a red-faced, awkward-looking creature, who claimed to have lived in Connecticut during his earlier days, and later followed the occupation of trapper in the northern part of New York, until enlisting in what Colonel Tupper called the "marine service."

When he first came on board Jethro was disposed to lord it over us three boys in no slight degree, but after twenty-four hours

passed Thad had a plain conversation with him which decided, as I thought, the question of authority beyond the necessity of reopening it.

During the evening of the day we gave our testimony in the military court Jethro had another outburst, which seemed but trifling to me, so quickly was it settled.

He announced to Thad his intention of living aft with us, because he considered it beneath his dignity to occupy the same quarters with the men under his command.

Now Thad was a fellow who could make another understand a great deal by the use of but few words, and on this occasion his speech was remarkably short.

"Your quarters in the hold are as good as ours, and if you are not satisfied with them, Corporal Barnes, I will ask Colonel Tupper to detail some one else in command of the guard aboard this schooner."

Jethro turned away sulkily, and Sam said to me, while we were hanging over the rail after the fellow had gone below:

"I reckon that is the last complaint we shall hear from Corporal Barnes. He is not

the kind of a fellow to put himself in the way of being obliged to leave a berth in which he is having a remarkably easy time."

And I believed as did Sam, being strengthened in my opinion as the days passed and he made no further complaint.

Neither did he show any liking for our company; but this was a matter of small concern to us, since we preferred to be alone whenever the opportunity presented itself.

On this 21st day of August, when we had warped around to the Grand Battery, ready to begin the work of loading, every one on board the schooner, with the single exception of Corporal Barnes, pulled off his coat in order to be more free of movement during the labor.

This gentleman strutted to and fro across the deck forward as if there was nothing in hand for him more important than to air his graces, and Thad said sharply, although by no means angrily, for he is a lad who can control his temper admirably:

"Now then, corporal, if you lend a hand we will run out these planks."

"I am on board this schooner in command of the guard, and not to work as a stevedore under your orders."

Thad straightened himself up quickly, and a deep red flush came over his face which would have been a warning to Corporal Barnes to keep a quiet tongue between his teeth had he known our captain better.

For a moment I thought Thad would measure strength with the soldier, and he has since confessed it was his intention to do so; but fortunately, as it then seemed to me, unfortunately as it afterward proved, he realized in time that either as a sergeant in the American army, or as the captain of the Laughing Mary, it was beneath his dignity to take part in a brawl, therefore he turned away in silence.

The corporal continued to pace to and fro while we took on board the ammunition, and when the job was finished we began the short voyage with Thad at the wheel and Sam and I standing by the sheets whenever it was necessary to come about, for we took especial pride in performing all the work of sailing the schooner ourselves. Thus far, never

once had we called upon the soldiers for assistance in this labor.

We stood over to the Brooklyn shore, and then laid on the other tack, expecting to make Governor's Island after coming about again.

Sam and I were forward alone, Corporal Barnes' squad all being below, and my comrade said in a cautious tone, after first looking around to make certain there were no eavesdroppers:

"I am sorry Thad decided not to flog that fellow."

"Why?" I asked in surprise. "It would not be a seemly story should Colonel Tupper hear that the boy he put in command of the Laughing Mary had no other means of enforcing discipline than by fisticuffs."

"Better that than worse."

"What do you mean?"

"Unless Corporal Barnes is made to know his place, and right speedily, all of us may find it necessary to play at that game, except we are willing to use more dangerous weapons."

I was not only surprised but alarmed at

hearing Sam speak in this manner, for he was not a lad given to anticipating trouble; on the contrary, always ready to believe in others, as I often told him.

"You are growing timorous," I said, trying to laugh away my own fears. "Because this trapper sergeant, who believes himself equal in rank with Colonel Willett, happens to get into the sulks you straightway tremble."

"It is all very well to make sport, 'Liphalet, of what you know nothing about. Barnes' behavior this morning would have troubled me very little but for the fact that this is not the first time he has shown signs of insubordination."

"You still remember the desire to move his quarters from the hold into the cabin?"

"You must be blind as a mole if you have not observed how that fellow has carried himself during the past two weeks. Had I been in Thad's place he would have gone ashore ten days ago."

"But what have you seen?"

"Enough to convince me he would make mischief for us if he could, and that he is already trying to work harm by inciting his

squad to what would be downright mutiny if he and they were sailors on board. Have you noticed that during the past week none of them remain on deck with us, although at any moment something might happen requiring the services of all on board?"

Now he spoke of it I remembered such was the fact; but until this moment had given no heed to it.

However, that Corporal Barnes and his men should go into their quarters while we were under way seemed to me a matter with which we should be pleased rather than irritated, and so I said to Sam.

"If he behaved himself properly toward Thad, who is not only the captain of this schooner but his superior in rank, I would never open my mouth though he stayed below a month; but it is his manner of going below; his way of speaking and a hundred little things I have noticed for some time past, all of which have increased until he broke out this morning."

"But why do you not speak to Thad about it?"

"I did, and he refused to listen."

To this I could make no reply.

Thad was the captain of the schooner, and, comrade though he was, we had no right to say what he should do.

While I stood gazing at Sam like a simple, we had sailed so far on this second tack that it was time to come about again, and further conversation was checked until our work had been performed.

Nor was there another opportunity for Sam to give voice to his fears before we arrived at Governor's Island, because Sergeant Burr kept both his mates actively employed until we were at anchor in port.

The work of unloading the schooner was performed expeditiously, and with but little assistance from us, Colonel Prescott sending a squad of his men to take charge of the work.

Corporal Barnes came on deck shortly after we dropped anchor and stood by the rail forward, watching idly the work of the Massachusetts soldiers until one of the boats was ready to return to the shore, when, without a word to Thad, he jumped aboard.

As a matter of fact he had no more right

to leave the schooner without permission of the captain than if it had been commanded by Colonel Tupper himself, and this unwarranted departure was as thorough a piece of mutiny as he could have indulged in.

Thad was aft at the time, and remained in ignorance of the corporal's departure until more than half an hour elapsed, when the boat in which he had embarked returned without him.

Then I called my comrade's attention to what had occurred, at the same time venturing to say:

"You are in command here, Thad, and it is not for me to make any suggestions."

"Now you are becoming as stiff-necked as Sam Antill," Thad replied almost irritably. "Because I was made sergeant and captain of the sloop, while you two only corporals and mates, is no reason why our friendship for each other has lessened. Nor do I claim to be higher in rank when we three are together. Why should you and Sam think it out of place to make suggestions to me?"

"Because the good of the cause, as I have heard Colonel Willett say, demands that due

regard be given rank and position in the army, and as he has claimed many a time in my hearing, the one evil to be feared in the American forces is that the men will carry with them the idea of kinship or friendship, and thereby impair the strict discipline which should be kept."

"Truly a brave lecture, Eliphalet Willett, but it is not your own. I can hear Sam Antill's voice in every word, and know who has taught the lesson. Were you and I in the ranks it might be necessary, while on duty, to hold strictly to military rules and usages; but I maintain that here on board the schooner we are, or should be, the same comrades as before entering the service. Now what suggestion would you make to me, but dare not because I am in command of this vessel, and you only a mate?"

His cheery, friendly manner of speaking heartened me to give words to the fears which had been aroused in my mind by Sam.

I could not tell him anything about Corporal Barnes of my own knowledge, for, as has been written, I had failed to note particularly the acts of insubordination of which

Sam complained, therefore did little more than repeat my comrade's words.

"I am sorry you fellows believe I should have made a brawling place of the Laughing Mary's deck," Thad replied. "Although I know no more of a soldier's duty than you or Sam, I am certaian such a course would not have met with the approval of either Colonel Tupper or your uncle. I have noted better than you the corporal's manner, and made up my mind, when he refused to assist in the loading, to lay the case before his superior officer and mine at the first opportunity. Unless I am much mistaken he will not be aboard the schooner this night."

This satisfied me, as it also did Sam when I had repeated the conversation to him, and both of us felt a sense of great relief because of the decided stand Thad proposed to take.

Before the work of unloading was finished a messenger came from the island to ask that the captain of the Laughing Mary attend upon Colonel Prescott, and Thad, stopping only long enough to put on his uniform coat and hat, departed, leaving Sam and I in command of the schooner.

Our captain was absent half an hour or more, and on his return explained that the officer in command of the fortification desired us to go over to Fort Defiance, at Red Hook, for the purpose of bringing back a couple of cannon which were to be loaned to the works on Governor's Island.

"I suppose we are in duty bound to obey the request, which was given in such a form as to be really a command," Thad said after he had given the information, "and yet we should by rights have Colonel Tupper's authority for thus prolonging the voyage."

I thought he was overnice in this regard, because if we were doing necessary work for any portion of the American army it mattered little whether the orders came from Lieutenant-Colonel Tupper, or Colonel Prescott.

Surely a man who had fought at Charleston as the commandant of the Governor's Island fortification was said to have fought should be obeyed as readily as either of our generals, and I for one believed it would be akin to mutiny to hesitate.

Sam shared my opinion to a certain extent,

although he did not state it as emphatically as I had done, and Thad's doubts as to his proper course seemed to have vanished.

"Is Corporal Barnes to go with us?" Sam asked.

"He will remain on board the schooner until relieved from such duty by his superior officer, therefore we shall have him with us until our return to New York."

"That is to say, you will if he chooses to come."

"Should he refuse I will see to it that Colonel Prescott puts him under arrest. I am not positive it is within my province to force him to assist in loading or unloading the schooner; but when it comes to a question of his doing duty as guard on board, I claim to have full authority over him."

These words, spoken so firmly, drove from my mind the fears which had been aroused by Sam's remarks, and I no longer felt any anxiety concerning the corporal's behavior.

The work of unloading was performed by the soldiers stationed on the island, while our own force remained lounging idly about the decks, and before it was finished the

man who had caused such a ruffle of anxiety came on board with as many airs and graces as if he had suddenly been called upon to assume General Washington's duties.

I fancied he would be surprised when, sail having been made, the Laughing Mary was headed down the harbor; but his face betrayed nothing of the kind, and I decided he had learned while on shore of the intended prolongation of the voyage.

The wind had fined down until it was of barely sufficient strength to keep our canvas full, and the run which should have been made in an hour or more occupied the time until nearly sunset.

When we came to an anchor close under the guns of Fort Defiance everything was made snug for the night, for we should not be able to get the cannon on board until morning, and the sun was fast disappearing in the west when Thad went ashore to explain the purpose of our coming.

Corporal Barnes, who had remained below with two of his men while we were running down from Governor's Island, came on deck when the anchor was let go, and there he

stayed as if it was his duty to see that our work was done in a sailor-like fashion, until Thad left the schooner.

No sooner had the boat, rowed by two of the soldiers, pushed off, than the corporal descended into the hold once more, and Sam and I were left alone.

The cook came aft to know if supper should be served, it now being the usual time for the meal, and was told we would wait until the captain returned.

He went away apparently content; but a moment later came back to say that Corporal Barnes had given orders his men be fed at once.

"He claims to have an independent command here, and insists on the right to order rations at any time," the cook added.

Sam remained silent while one might have counted twenty.

He had believed Thad should be exceedingly strict in dealing with such a fellow as the corporal, but now that the command devolved upon himself, I could see he was in doubt as to whether it would be wise to give an order which might be disobeyed.

Fearing lest he should be weak-kneed in the matter, I said quickly:

"The corporal is trying to see how far he can go in his mutinous conduct, and the more we give in to him the more we shall be obliged to yield."

Whether it was my remark which determined Sam in his course I am unable to say; but of a certainty he said quickly, with the air of one who intended to be obeyed:

"Supper will not be served to any one on board until the captain's return, however long he may be absent."

Suspicious as I had now become, there was in the profound salute which the cook gave Sam something that I fancied savored of impudence, and made me resolve to keep a sharp eye on the fellow in the future.

"Corporal Barnes is bound to make trouble for us," I said to my comrade when the cook had disappeared.

"He won't have a chance, for now that Thad has promised to make complaint to Colonel Tupper when we get back to the city, I shall insist that he do so, and by this time

to-morrow the guard of the schooner will be under command of a different man."

"I wish he might be sent on shore to-night."

"So do I; but it cannot be done. It is not probable he will do more than affect contempt of our authority, and that we can bear with a few hours longer."

Then, as if to put a disagreeable subject from his mind, Sam began to talk of what move the Britishers might first make toward attacking the city, and both he and I had become interested in the subject when Corporal Barnes, with all of his men, came from the hold and went directly to the galley.

"Why has supper not been given out?" we heard him ask the cook in an angry tone, and could readily distinguish the reply:

"Because the first mate has ordered that no meals be served until the captain comes on board."

"I have no concern with the infants who claim to be in charge of this schooner," the corporal cried savagely. "I am in command of the guard on board, and independent of babies like them. My orders are that rations

be served within ten minutes, or it will be a serious matter for you, Mr. Cook."

Here was a pretty kettle of fish for Sam and I to fry.

Had Thad been on board we should have said boldly it was his duty to give the impudent trapper-corporal such a lesson as he would not forget; but when it came to our taking the matter in hand it was a different story, and I, for my part, was at a loss to know what should be done.

Sam remained as if plunged into the same state of perplexity that I was, and we two stood staring at each other, believing that as officers of the Laughing Mary we were higher in rank than the corporal of the guard, and yet doubtful as to how far we could rightfully go in attempting to assert our authority.

Then also, it might be a difficult matter for us to prevent the corporal and his men, who numbered six all told, from doing exactly as they pleased.

To make an effort at enforcing a command, and failing, would be worse than allowing him his own way during the few hours which

must pass before we were where he could be dealt with in proper fashion.

While we stood thus deliberating the cook came aft again, and at that moment, from the expression on his face, I felt confident he was in league with Barnes against us.

"You heard what the commander of the guard said," and the sallow-faced villain was impudent in manner, if not in words. "How am I to act?"

"No food is to be given out until the captain returns," and Sam spoke as if positive his orders would be obeyed, which was far more than I could have done under the circumstances.

"Corporal Barnes has the same rank as either of you, and because of his age must be in authority here," the cook said with the same impudent swagger.

"Captain Burr, who is also a sergeant in the army, commands this schooner, and even though the commandant of Fort Defiance himself was on board he would have no authority in anything concerning the discipline of this vessel."

I could have hugged my comrade for the

manly spirit he showed, but at the same time observed with alarm that the cook was not inclined to take his view of the matter.

The fellow stood for a moment as if in reflection, and then said sulkily:

"If the corporal and his men go into the galley they can easily take what they choose and I am not such a fool as to try to prevent them."

"That is exactly what you must do, otherwise when we arrive at the city you may have an opportunity to explain why you disobeyed orders."

"Do you count on going back to the city very soon?" the cook asked in a tone which startled me, because for the instant I fancied there was a double meaning in the words; but I put that idea far from my mind almost instantly, since it seemed in the highest degree foolish.

Sam looked at the cook angrily as if about to make an intemperate reply; but before he could do so I saw Thad coming down from the fort to the boat.

"The captain will soon be on board," I said.

"And he will settle this matter after his own fashion," Sam added with a sigh of relief that the responsibility had been lifted from his shoulders.

CHAPTER VI.

TREACHERY.

Probably if Thad had known what serious danger there was of mutiny on board the Laughing Mary, he would have pursued a far different course, and then who shall say that matters might not have turned out better, not only for us, but for that portion of the American army on the Brooklyn Heights?

It hardly seems possible a villain like Corporal Barnes could have it in his power to work indirectly so much mischief as he succeeded in working on this day at Red Hook.

I say it seems impossible he could have effected so much, but it is not for me to set down my own thoughts or speculations, therefore I will leave the might-have-beens to take care of themselves, and continue this record in as nearly a proper manner as is within my ability.

Thad had set off from the shore with the

air of one who is in very good humor with himself and every one around him, and what seemed odd to me at the moment was that his first words on reaching the deck were directed to the cook.

"You can serve supper now, and in the future, unless I give orders to the contrary, meals will be set out at the usual hours whether I am here or not."

If Thad had known all we did he could not have settled so effectually that question which at one time threatened to become dangerous, and what was more to the purpose, Corporal Barnes was now unable to comfort himself with the thought that his bullying had been of any avail.

For the moment it seemed to me as if we were well out of a decidedly disagreeable position, for I was not such a fool as to think that we three aft could oppose those forward with any hope of success, if the members of the guard were united in mutiny.

"We will have the guns aboard shortly after daylight to-morrow," Thad said in a tone sufficiently loud for all to hear, as he joined Sam and I. "Had I not been afraid

you fellows would wait supper for me, as I see is the case, I should have accepted the commandant's invitation to remain ashore for a spell. We have such important news to take back to the city that if there was sufficient wind I would run up at once, and make another trip for the guns; but as it is, no time will be saved by our knocking about the bay all night."

"Is it secret information you have been intrusted with?" Sam asked, showing unusual respect to Thad at this moment, because two members of the guard, having heard his announcement, were edging their way aft with studied carelessness to hear the story.

"It is no more than will soon be known, and has long been anticipated by all of us. The indications are that the British are making preparations for a decided move, and the commandant believes we shall have plenty of work cut out for us within the next forty-eight hours."

"Which means that they count on capturing the city at once," I added.

"Exactly; yet they have allowed our

people time enough in which to fortify Brooklyn Heights, and the task will not be as easy as it might have proven two months ago. But let us have supper. There is no reason why we can't talk while eating, and I am as hungry as a shark."

I noted with no slight satisfaction that despite Corporal Barnes' bullying, the cook was about to serve the captain first, as was seemly.

I had feared the insubordination on board the schooner might be so strong that we would have further proof of it by seeing the corporal's guard waited upon while we remained hungry.

Perhaps it would have been better were my fears realized, for then we should have continued more on the alert.

Once in the cabin, and confident our conversation would not be overheard because all hands were pleasantly engaged with their rations, Sam repeated to Thad all that had occurred during his absence.

"He won't have much opportunity to make more trouble," the captain said after a long pause, during which he looked decidedly

disturbed. "The soldiers at the fortification will attend to slinging the cannon aboard, with such assistance as we can render them, and that mutinous corporal need not be called upon. I am willing to guarantee that in less than an hour from the time of our arrival in New York he will be under arrest."

"I am not certain but that it would be better if I had pushed matters so far that we should be warranted in leaving him here at the Hook," Sam said thoughtfully.

"One could almost fancy you afraid of that bullying fellow."

"I am afraid of what he may be able to do. Remember, Thad, he and his men make up six, and if I am not mistaken the cook is of the same kidney. Therefore it would be seven against three in case of trouble."

"But no great trouble can occur, Sam Antill," Thad replied almost sharply. "He may try to make it as disagreeable for us as possible, because of jealousy that three lads should be in command over him; but he will never dare to create any serious disturbance."

I shared the captain's opinion, and believed

the first mate was allowing himself to entertain foolish fears.

From the time we had first taken command of the schooner, Sam and I as mates kept strict watch and watch during the night, whether we were at anchor or under way, although at meal time, as in the present case, when the Laughing Mary was in harbor, we left the decks unguarded.

Once observing such to be our rule, Colonel Tupper had laughingly said that we were overcautious; that the sentry of the guard was sufficient protection for us while we lay under the guns of the fort; but notwithstanding this fact our vigilance had not been relaxed.

Therefore it was that as soon as supper came to an end I went on deck, it being Sam's watch below.

The night had fully shut down.

Far away in the distance I could see the riding-lights of the British fleet, but no sound broke the silence, which was so profound that unconsciously I fell to wondering why our people were in such a state of quietude.

Ordinarily the noise of conversation which came from the soldiers' quarters was so great as to be heard unpleasantly distinct in the cabin; but now I could not detect so much as a whisper.

Under no circumstances would I have allowed the men to think I was spying on them, and I paced to and fro with unnecessary noise, yet at the same time taking good care to confine my walk to the vicinity of the hatchway in the hope of learning the cause of this unusual quietude.

I did not succeed in such purpose, however; but presently discovered that the cook, instead of being in his own quarters, was with the corporal's men, and this seemed to me odd, although by no means a suspicious circumstance.

At midnight Sam came on deck to relieve me, and as in duty bound I reported to him the condition of affairs.

"Not a man has shown himself since I have been here. The cook must yet be in the hold, and although on the alert, I have not heard a whisper."

"Perhaps they turned in early," Sam

replied, and I, believing he had been unnecessarily suspicious during the day, would not further excite him by a suggestion that such a course was unusual; that the guard had done nothing to weary themselves during the day, and never before had I known them to go below willingly during pleasant weather.

Sam asked no further questions, and I, strong with the desire for sleep despite the forebodings which would not be banished, went below.

There were but four bunks in the cabin of the Laughing Mary.

Thad occupied the lower one on the starboard side, while Sam and I were lodged in the two opposite.

The fourth was kept as a spare one in case we should have as passenger some officer of the army.

The captain was asleep, and I would not have disturbed him for anything of an ordinary nature, because it was seldom Thad indulged in a protracted rest. He considered it his duty to be on deck very frequently during the night, and in fact stood watch longer than either Sam or myself.

I turned in "all standing" as the sailors say, meaning that I did not remove any portion of my clothing, and it was as if I had hardly stretched myself out at full length before slumber overpowered me.

How long I remained unconscious it is impossible to say; but to me it seemed as if I had hardly closed my eyes before I was awakened by heavy pressure upon the throat, and on attempting to spring up found myself held firmly down.

For fully a minute after opening my eyes it was impossible to so much as guess what was taking place, and then as I became accustomed to the gloom I saw sufficient to give me a thorough understanding of the situation.

It was one of the soldiers who grasped my throat with his left hand, while in his right he held a naked knife.

On the opposite side of the cabin I could see two men occupied with Thad, and I believed they were Corporal Barnes and the cook.

From the deck came no sound, and even though the peril to myself seemed very great

my first connected thought was of wonderment that Sam had not made an outcry, for I now knew that the corporal whose duty it was to guard well those on board the schooner had turned mutineer, most probably traitor to his country.

"Have you got the gag in so there is no chance he can slip it?" I heard that villain Barnes ask, and the cook replied:

"Trust me for that part of the work. So long as his hands are tied his mouth will be closed."

"Lash both arms close, and be quick about it, for we must get under way at once. If the fool hadn't told us there was good reason for going back to the city we might not find such smooth sailing in this work."

I was minded to cry out for help, believing Sam to be on duty above and ignorant of what was going on here; but the pressure upon my throat was so great that a low gurgling was the only result of my efforts.

"What is that cub tryin' to do?" Barnes asked sharply, turning toward the man who held me in his grip.

"I reckon he allowed to give an alarm, but

there's no fear of that, corporal, while I have hold of his windpipe," and the fellow added to me, "I'd like to shake the breath out of your body, you little whelp. Because of having an uncle who is a colonel you think to lord it over your betters."

I perforce remained silent, and I thought of a verity the man would strangle me, so vicious was the grasp he had upon my throat.

"That is done, and I'll wager my head he don't do more than wink until the lashings are taken off," the cook said in a tone of satisfaction, as if such work pleased him hugely.

"Then make haste and get the other one trussed up, for we must take advantage of the current."

As the man came toward me I noted the unpleasant fact that the spare berth had an occupant, and now knew why we did not hear Sam on deck.

He had most likely been overpowered first, and brought below by some of the other mutineers in as helpless a condition as the captain now was.

To gag and bind me was but a simple task,

half-strangled as I was, and then the scoundrels went on deck.

The thoughts which came to me as I lay there helpless even to make the slightest outcry were so many and painful as to prevent me from realizing the distress caused by the gag and the many folds of rope which encircled my body.

I think the fact foremost in my mind was that we three comrades having, as a reward for the small part played in the discovery of a plot against General Washington, been given command of the trimmest schooner to be found in the harbor, had, by carelessness, lost her before having done any effective work, for I knew beyond a question that the corporal and his men would not dare return to New York after this rascally piece of business.

How severely I blamed myself for not having been more suspicious it is not necessary to set down.

I realized all too keenly that at the first sign of insubordination in Barnes he should have been put under arrest—that it was my duty as second officer to have insisted, in

view of what I knew, on his being left at Governor's Island.

Far better had Colonel Tupper reproved us for being too cautious than for us to have allowed this thing to take place.

Now I doubted not but that Barnes had joined the American army for the sole purpose of giving information to the enemy, and I also believed the cook to be of the same kidney.

It was positive that at least two of the men were loyal to the cause—those two who had rowed the captain ashore—but they might have been brought over to this treachery by force, threats or persuasion, and, perhaps, were as helpless as we.

In trying to set down my thoughts when I lay there unable to even protest against the work of the traitors, I find I have failed most deplorably in making plain the distress which was mine at that moment. I knew Thad and Sam were suffering equally with me, and that three more wretched lads could not have been found in this country.

Everything favored the traitors.

I knew not if Thad had mentioned to the

commandant of Fort Defiance the same idea which he gave to us on coming aboard, that he would carry to New York the information given him concerning the British that night, if the wind allowed; but even though he had not, the officer, seeing the schooner depart, would, in case a breeze sprang up, naturally conclude such to be the captain's intention, and therefore no suspicions could be aroused.

I knew as well as if the scoundrel Barnes had explained to me all his bold plot that the Laughing Mary would be headed for Staten Island, and on her arrival there be given up to our enemies.

What might become of us I made no conjecture.

At that moment it seemed of little importance, since we had thus through carelessness lost the vessel which we should have defended with our lives.

Now and then I could hear the sound of stealthy footsteps on deck, and understood that the men had taken off their shoes in order to move about as silently as possible.

I heard the creaking of the blocks which told that the sails were being hoisted, and

waited to feel the movement of the schooner that I might know how strongly the wind was blowing.

The breeze was so slight, if indeed there was any, that no motion was perceptible to us below; but I knew the Laughing Mary must be carried down past the Hook toward the British fleet by the current, even though not a breath of air filled her sails.

Distressed alike both in body and mind, I could have no very good idea of the passage of time; but it appeared to me as if an hour must have passed before we heard aught more of the traitors, and then Barnes, with his chief assistant, the cook, entered the cabin.

From the fact that they lighted the candle I believed we were some distance past Fort Defiance.

The corporal had evidently come below for the purpose of making certain we were yet bound securely.

He looked to the ropes upon our limbs, and then, standing in the middle of the cabin as if we might know he was addressing all three, said with a swagger:

"By this time to-morrow Tupper will understand that he was not as wise as he thought himself to be, when he gave the command of this craft to boys. Did you think men would be willing to put up with your airs and graces? Well, they wouldn't, as you have seen. I held out as long as any one could have done, and the result is that the so-called American army has lost the fleetest schooner in the harbor. But don't think that my plan ends with taking possession of the vessel; I have some old scores to settle with you fellows before you are turned over as prisoners to Lord Howe, and will take good care to square the account in full."

"What is the satisfaction in threatening when they can't answer?" the cook asked with a grin. "Wait till we are far enough down the harbor, and then take out the gags. I never enjoyed whipping a cur if I couldn't hear him howl."

"There's no harm in giving them something to think about," Barnes replied as he threw himself on the locker just beneath my bunk. "There wasn't as much danger in the scheme as the men seemed to think."

"It has not amounted to more than the baggin' of three kids, and could as well have been done any time while we were layin' off Grand Battery."

"True; but then we should have gained nothing more than the possession of this craft. Now we prevent the news of Lord Howe's movements being carried to the city, and that is a trick worth waiting for."

"I thought you agreed that we should not concern ourselves about the British, once we got possession of the Laughing Mary," and now the cook spoke as if he was growing angry.

"I haven't said anything to the contrary."

"But it seems as if you meant it, otherwise why crow about what these fellows won't be able to tell? I have no wish to give up a craft like this to the British, who will take her with not so much as a 'thank you.' We have a chance now to make a brave venture, and I for one shan't agree to turning her over to either army."

"Don't be a fool! We must at least make a show of doin' so, otherwise how do you count on our bein' able to get through the

fleet? It is not likely they will allow us to sail directly by without so much as a hail."

"I told you before we begun the work that I had my suspicions as to whether you would play fair or not," the cook cried as he stepped directly in front of the corporal. "I came into the scheme with the understanding that once we got possession of the schooner we should hold her."

"And turn pirate, eh?"

"We have got as much right to start a war of our own as any one else, and there is many a rich prize to be had just now, without running the risk of being called pirates. Who shall know whether we are sailing on our own account or for this little government which has just sprung up? Have a care, Corporal Barnes, how you try to play me false! I am no boy like the fellow who was placed in command of the schooner, and won't be trifled with!"

"Nobody has any idea of trifling, you fool!" Barnes replied sulkily, and a great joy sprang up in my heart as I understood that he was afraid of the cook, for I hoped, although I knew not how it might be com-

passed, that if these two ringleaders in the traitorous work should fall out, there might be an opportunity for us to regain what we had lost through carelessness.

The villains continued to converse for some time, the cook insisting that the Laughing Mary should be used by them as a free-booter, and Barnes not daring to say him nay, although it evidently was his purpose to deliver her up to the British admiral.

As I reflected upon the matter while they were yet in angry discussion, my new-born hopes faded gradually away, for I did not believe they could take the schooner through the British fleet unchallenged.

As it seemed to me, the least they could expect was that the vessel would be hove-to, and then some explanation must be made, after which there seemed little doubt but that she would be seized as a prize.

The cook worked himself up into such a fury that Barnes finally promised most solemnly he would do all he could in furtherance of the piratical scheme, and swore that the thought of breaking the promise given had never come into his mind.

"I will trust you just so long as you are within reach of my arm," the cook said threateni gly, when, the discussion having come to an end, the two men arose to go on deck; "and at the first show of treachery your life shall pay the forfeit even though I swing for it."

"Don't make a bigger fool of yourself than is necessary," Barnes grumbled. "My word has been passed, and that is enough."

"Not for me. I shall take good care you don't play me false."

Then the traitor and would-be pirate went on deck, and from the fact that there was evidently no attempt at preserving silence, I knew our little schooner was beyond the reach of the American guns—that it was only a question as to whether she would become the prize of the British admiral or a free-booter.

CHAPTER VII.

FRIGHTENED TRAITORS.

WHEN we were alone once more even anxiety of mind did not prevent me from realizing most keenly the agony caused by the gag and bonds.

It was impossible to move hand or foot, and save I had rolled out on to the floor, my body must perforce remain motionless.

Breathing seemed a laborious process, and there came to my mind the thought that unless I soon had relief suffocation must ensue, although most likely a fellow would have remained alive very many hours under such circumstances.

The difficulty of breathing was more a trick of the imagination than a fact.

So great was my bodily pain that I ceased to bewail the loss of the schooner, which was in fact more important than the lives of us

three lads, and gave no heed to the agony which my companions must also be enduring.

It was only to self that I gave any thought, and when, perhaps half an hour after Barnes and the cook had left us, one of the soldiers came into the cabin for apparently no other purpose than to see if we were secure, I implored him, as eloquently as was possible with my eyes, for relief.

The man—Joseph Clark from New Hampshire—understood that I was in great pain, and with an expression of sympathy on his face came toward the bunk.

"I reckon you would like to have that block taken out of your mouth?" he asked, and I nodded as energetically as I could under the circumstances.

"The orders are, if it so be we're obliged to take orders from the corporal now he has ceased to be a soldier by turning traitor, that you three shall not be interfered with in any way; but if you promise solemnly to make no outcry I'll do what I can toward easin' up on you a bit."

Again I nodded my head, and a most in-

tense relief was mine when he quickly removed the gag.

For a moment or more it was impossible to speak, so cramped had my jaws become, and when I did succeed in doing so it was in a mumbling sort of fashion, like one whose tongue has been thickened by strong drink.

Then, knowing by my own experience that my comrades were suffering, I implored him to relieve them in so far as he had me.

"I answer for it they remain silent, as I have promised to do, and shall make no resistance if the moment comes when, for your own safety, you think it necessary to replace the bonds."

"It may not be safe, this running counter to those who claim to be my masters," he said timidly, and I, eager that my comrades should be speedily relieved, added, with an inward prayer that I might succeed in convincing this soldier:

"Look you, Clark, even though this mutiny now seems successful, it may yet miscarry, and the time come when you will need a friend, for should the fortunes of war throw you into the hands of those whom

Barnes has betrayed nothing less than hanging can be the penalty. Then you might be served a good turn by having friends in us. Besides, I know full well your heart is not in this work."

"Indeed it isn't!" was the emphatic reply. "When the subject was first broached I refused to have anything to do with the plot, and held out until nearly the whole squad had been brought over, though never until to-night have we known it was the purpose of the corporal and the cook to deliver the schooner to the British, or turn freebooters. When Barnes opened the matter to us it was with the idea that while on the voyage we would make you prisoners to be delivered to Colonel Tupper, on the grounds that you had exceeded lawful authority."

I was not willing the man should defend himself at any length while my comrades were in such pain, and interrupted him impatiently by saying:

"I cannot believe your heart was ever in such a matter, and if you would save the lives of Thad and Sam I implore you take the gags from their mouths. I think another

half-hour of such suffering would have killed me. Surely we can do you no harm now, the schooner is so far from the Hook."

Clark turned as if to grant my request, and then stopped an instant.

"Do you promise they shall make no outcry, and that all hands will remain silent when Barnes comes back?"

"I do, and if either of them refuses when it is possible to speak, you will have but little trouble in rendering us as helpless as before."

He hesitated no longer, and by the deep sighs which came from my comrades a moment later, I understood how great was their relief.

Thad must have hoped some one of the squad would prove a friend, and been laying his plans accordingly, for he said immediately the cramp in his jaws had so far subsided that it was possible to speak:

"You have done us a turn that shan't be forgotten, Clark, and just now perhaps it is all you can do. I have no question but what you said to Eliphalet be true, and implore that you consider well all which may result

from this mutiny. Even though the Britishers reward you richly for the capture of the schooner, no one can return to his native country, however soon the war might come to an end. Think you what the men of New Hampshire, who have thus far played a brave part in our struggle, would say should you present yourself at home after having proven traitor to the cause."

"Look here, captain, there's no need of talk like that, for I have turned the matter over in my mind a dozen times since you were made prisoners. I am only one of seven, and as powerless as you are at this minute."

"That I can understand, but the time may come when it will be possible to render signal service, and I implore you to consider well all which this traitorous behavior may mean. Don't allow yourself to be led by a renegade like Barnes, for even though you should be received in a friendly way by the Britishers, there is never a man among them who will not despise you for the part that has been played. An honest enemy is respected; a traitor will ever be hated by all,

even those whom he benefits by his villainous acts."

I believe of a verity Thad would have won Clark over then and there had he been allowed to continue; but just at that moment the man's name was called loudly from the deck, and he hastened up the companion-way, glad no doubt to put an end to a conversation which could not have been pleasing to him under the circumstances.

A sudden heel of the schooner as Clark disappeared overturned the candle which had only been fastened to the swinging-table by its own tallow, and told us that the breeze was increasing in force.

"In what direction was the wind when you came below?" Thad asked of me, and Sam replied:

"I was the last on deck, and then it was a little south of west."

"If it still holds from that point they may have some trouble in making the fleet. How were you overpowered?"

"The traitors crept up behind and felled me to the deck. While half-stunned, they gagged and brought me below," Sam replied.

"I relieved 'Liphalet at about midnight, and during half an hour after he turned in, heard no sound from the hold. I was standing amidships leaning over the port rail when there came a noise as of some one creeping across the deck; but before I could turn the blow was struck. Then, when I had been trussed up in this fashion, the whole gang came below, and I reckon you know the rest. Had I done my duty this evening it would not have been in Barnes' power to work such mischief!"

"What do you mean by your duty?" Thad asked sharply.

"I should have insisted that you put him under arrest, for I was convinced the fellow had it in his heart to work us some harm."

"You surely cannot blame yourself because of my neglect. Both of you told me enough to warrant my sending him ashore at Governor's Island; but by so doing it would have shown I was unable to enforce discipline on the schooner, and I did not feel willing to let it appear as if I was afraid of a single man. I am the one who is at fault."

"The question of who has been careless

can be settled later," I said irritably. "Instead of wasting your breath over what may be discussed as well at any other time, we had better decide upon some course of action, for when Barnes comes into the cabin again I reckon these gags will be replaced."

"Much good any decision we may come at will do," Sam grumbled, and by the tone of his voice I understood he had no hope we would be able to better our condition. "Barnes has us well in his power, and before sunrise we shall be prisoners in the British fleet."

"That is not so certain," Thad replied. "The cook has it in his mind to turn freebooter, which does not accord with the corporal's plans, and between the two there is a chance matters may veer to our benefit."

"But it's a precious poor chance."

"It is better to hope for the best than anticipate the worst."

"Unless we have assistance from some one of the mutineers, which is not probable, what can we do? At present our tongues are the only members of our body we can so much as move."

"It isn't certain——"

Thad was interrupted by a dark form which appeared at the companionway, and as the mutineer descended I believed that, our voices having been overheard, we should be forced to submit to the gags again.

It was Barnes who had come below, and with an exclamation of impatience because the cabin was in darkness owing to the fact that the candle had been overturned when the schooner heeled under the breeze, he groped his way toward the swinging-table.

Before he could find that for which he evidently sought, a second mutineer entered the cabin and said quickly, as if he would have a disagreeable matter settled without delay:

"Look here, corporal, I took the gags out of those boys' mouths."

"You did?" and Barnes stepped forward menacingly, craning his head that he might distinguish the face of the speaker.

"It's Clark," the man replied, understanding the meaning of the movement.

"What right had you to interfere with the prisoners?"

"The right which any man has who does

not care to have murder done where he is concerned. Those boys were nigh to being strangled, and on their promising not to make an outcry I gave them a chance to breathe."

"So you are turning traitor! Be careful what you're about, Clark! This is a time when life don't count for much, and you may come to the end of your rope too suddenly."

"As for turning traitor, that I did when I agreed to your plans, so we won't call any harsh names after the pot and kettle fashion. The understanding was that no blood should be spilled."

"Nor would there have been had these cubs quietly choked to death."

"What we have done is too serious a matter to warrant our quibbling with words. You shall play fair, Barnes, according to the agreement made this evening, or you'll find I'm not the only member of the squad whom you can count as an enemy."

"So you are threatening, eh? Better wait till we are out of the woods, my man."

"I threaten in order that we shall get out, and warn you to hold to the agreement."

"In the same way you have done by sneak-

ing down here, loosening the prisoners without my knowledge?"

"I came because you wanted to know if they were all right, and found them near to death. No harm can come of removing the gags, because though they should yell from now out, who save Britishers or traitors would hear them?"

"Well, what do you want now?" the corporal asked as Clark paused.

"Nothing, except to make sure you don't kill those boys."

For a moment I believed the leader in this treacherous work was about to spring upon his subordinate; but he evidently thought better of it, realizing he was not yet on such terms of friendship with the cook that he could afford to quarrel with any of his squad, and said in what he likely counted should be a friendly tone:

"It is all right, Clark. I've got no reason to kill the cubs, even though they have lorded it over their betters till an honest man grew sick at the sight of 'em. As you say, there is no longer any danger of their giving an alarm to those who might interfere

with our plans, and perhaps it is well they be allowed to breathe comfortably. Now that the matter is settled, you can go on deck."

"I am as willing to stay here," Clark replied gravely, and this sign of insubordination against the leader in the plot heartened me wonderfully, for I began to believe should an opportunity present itself, the soldier would make amends for what he had already done, by aiding us.

Even in the darkness I could understand that Barnes found it difficult to refrain from replying, but he did succeed, and turned all his attention to the tinder-box, by means of which he soon had the candle relighted.

Could I have killed the fellow as he stood there looking triumphantly first at the captain and Sam, and then at me, I am certain at no time in the future would I have believed myself guilty of a crime in putting an end to his worse than useless life.

But I was unable to move hand or foot, and he for the moment powerful.

Clark had thrown himself on the locker with the air of one who intends to remain whether he be welcome or not, and Barnes,

apparently giving no heed to the man, addressed himself to Thad.

"Those who crow loudest do not always crow longest," he said jeeringly. "You fellows lorded it over us, who are your betters, and now the tables have been turned. I am the master, and such a one as you could never be."

"For which I am humbly thankful," Thad replied decidedly, and Clark laughed boisterously, much to the corporal's annoyance.

I believed the traitorous villain was about to gratify his mean heart by taunting us while we were helpless, and nerved myself to remain silent, determined not to be goaded into an ill-advised word, for much might depend upon our language in influencing Clark's wavering mind.

It is needless to set down here all the renegade said.

He accused us of arrogance, of undue pride because we had been put in command of the Laughing Mary, and even of a desire to injure him; but only once during this tirade was he interrupted, when Thad said mildly but yet firmly:

"In your heart you know, Barnes, that all you have said is false. From the first you have intended to betray the cause so far as was in your power, and accused us of these things simply in order to influence men who would have remained true to their country instead of playing the part of traitors."

This was not the sort of talk the corporal was willing Clark should hear, for it was too true to be palatable, and he yelled as he made a menacing gesture:

"Hold your tongue, you whelp, or I'll put it out of your power to so much as whimper!"

Thad made no attempt at replying, and this submission angered the corporal even more than words would have done.

Stepping quickly to the side of the bunk I believed the fellow intended to strike Thad, helpless though he was, and Clark must have fancied the same, for he sprang to his feet instantly, when, noting the movement, Barnes cried:

"Keep in your place, my bantam! Don't forget that I am master, and you may go too far."

"Have a care, Corporal Barnes," the man

replied angrily. "My comrades won't stand idly by if it is known that I tried to prevent you from striking a helpless lad. Even though I am in this miserable business which may lead us all to the gallows, I don't intend to countenance such cowardly work."

I was beginning to hope the two might come to blows, believing the members of the squad would take their comrade's part rather than the corporal's, but, and at the time it seemed unfortunate, there came a diversion which caused both men to forget their cause of anger.

The cook's voice was heard from the deck calling imperatively for the corporal, and, as Barnes delayed answering for an instant, we heard one of the soldiers cry in tones of terror:

"We shall be aground, or, what is worse, drift back to the fort if something isn't done speedily!"

Barnes sprang on deck followed by Clark, and then came the noise of men running to and fro; blows on the deck as coils of rope were thrown down; the creaking of the cordage, and the Laughing Mary heeled before

what was likely a sudden squall of wind until I was near to rolling out of the bunk.

"Perhaps a thunder gust is coming up," Thad suggested; "otherwise we shouldn't have so much of a breeze, for there were no signs of a storm when I came below."

"And if it should happen while the wind remains as it was when they made me prisoner, the Laughing Mary may not be in the possession of the British as soon as the corporal fancies," Sam said exultantly, while I, thinking of the danger to myself, added:

"With no sailors on deck she is as likely to run aground as to drift back toward Fort Defiance."

"Better she were swamped, and we with her, than that Barnes succeed in his treacherous work," Thad said so emphatically I could have no question but that he would willingly yield up his life if thereby the plans of the traitors could be thwarted.

It was difficult for us to say, with only the trampling to and fro above to give an inkling, in what position was the schooner.

We knew as she heeled over until the larboard rail must have been near to the edge

of the water, and then recovered herself, that the little craft had been put about, but on what tack we could not say.

Then came cries of alarm, and a moment later Barnes entered the cabin.

"If I take you on deck can we count on your telling us what to do?" he asked of Thad, and the latter replied so promptly and so bravely that I loved him as never before:

"Not while I am your prisoner."

"Then the vessel is like to go down, and you in her."

"I am content that she should, so it spoils your traitorous plans."

"We shall be ashore here!" the cook shouted from the companionway, and I could have laughed because there was so much terror in his voice. "Bring the captain on deck!"

"Will you go if I set you free?" Barnes asked vigorously.

"If you release my comrades and agree to obey orders, but not unless."

"You are a fool! You will drown here like a rat!"

"And I am willing to if you drown with me, you traitor!"

Barnes ran up the companionway like one frantic with fear.

We heard him shout first one order and then another so rapidly that none could have been obeyed even though skillful sailors were on deck, and then there came a sudden shock which caused the Laughing Mary to groan in every joint of her timbers, and for an instant all was silent.

That she had gone aground we knew full well, and, leaning over the edge of the bunk, I tried to peer into the gloom, expecting each moment to hear the gurgling of waters which would tell us we were soon to be drowned, but yet, and it seems strange even at this day, there was no fear of death in my heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CLEVER TRICK.

ALTHOUGH certain the Laughing Mary was aground, and we in a helpless condition unable to make any move toward insuring our own safety, there was much to hearten us in the matter.

It was evident from the shock that she had neither gone on the rocks nor been stove very badly, and therefore not impossible she might be gotten afloat.

"We're ashore, and perhaps wrecked," Thad said, forced almost to shout because of the tumult on the deck, "and according to my way of thinking a good deal better off than if the plan of either Barnes or the cook had been carried out."

"I do not see how our condition has been bettered, for the chances are ten to one that the schooner will fill where she is, and unless

the pirates carry us on deck we stand a good chance of being drowned," Sam shouted, but there was no longer either fear or despondency in his tone.

I fancied we had taken the shore head on, because the surf appeared to beat directly upon the schooner's stern, and also from the fact that we had no very great list either to starboard or larboard, but the aftermost part of the vessel was so depressed that it would have been like climbing uphill to go from the companionway to the table.

It was as if each of the traitorous mutineers was trying to outscream the other, and after we had listened to the shrieking a moment, trying in vain to distinguish the words, Sam suggested:

"We must have gone aground on some portion of the shore that is inhabited. Those fellows appear to be crying for help, which they would not do unless there were signs of life near about."

"I'll venture to say the cook would yell if he was in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, for the fellow is a rank coward if there ever was one," Thad replied, and added a moment

later: "There doesn't seem to be any water coming in, and if she was strained badly we should see it here first. I only hope we may be able to make some sort of a trade with them."

A horrible thought came to me at this moment, and I gave it words.

"Their first idea will be to leave the schooner, fearing she may go down, and if they should do so, allowing us to remain where we are, it might be a case of starving to death."

Thad and Sam suddenly fell silent; most likely that which I suggested had not been anticipated by them, and the possibility was decidedly unpleasant.

How long the uproar on the deck continued uninterrupted, I know not. It might equally well have been five minutes or twenty before the mutineers showed signs of remembering us, and then Clark came below.

"Where are you?" he shouted nervously, as if fearing he might be entering the presence of death.

"Here where you left us," Sam replied. "What's being done on deck?"

"Nothing to any effect. Barnes and the cook are acting like crazy men."

"Do you know where we have gone ashore?"

"No; it is so dark because of the clouds that you can't see an inch before your nose, and if I am not mistaken the storm has but just begun."

Even as Clark spoke a vivid flash of lightning illumined the cabin, almost instantly followed by a crash of thunder that seemed to shake the stranded schooner from stem to stern.

"Can you say which shore we are on?" Thad asked as soon as it was possible to make his voice heard, for the warring of the elements had increased the terrors of those above, causing a fresh outburst of cries and imprecations.

"It may be that flash of lightning showed something, but when I came below we couldn't see the land, although the schooner must have driven high upon it. The cook, so scared as not to know what he was doing, attempted to launch the boat just after we struck, with the result that she was stove."

"What does Barnes count on doing?"

"I don't believe he can answer that question even to himself. When Leggett was drowned——"

"Drowned!" I cried in astonishment.

"Yes; he was helping the cook, and in the boat at the time she was stove. Of course he must have been drowned, for we didn't hear of him save for one cry. After the poor fellow went under the corporal lost his head entirely, and not until I insisted upon its being done were the sails lowered."

"If Barnes isn't capable of doing anything, why don't some of you take the matter in hand?"

"That's what I'm here to do," Clark replied, as if having forgotten the purpose of his visit and the question had but just been recalled to mind. "I want you who know something about such work to come on deck."

"I should have been there long before this if it had been possible to move."

"Will you come now if I take off the ropes?"

"Is there any bargain you intend to make

in payment for giving us our liberty?" Thad asked sternly, and the soldier replied in a tone of perplexity:

"I don't know what you mean."

"Do you expect any promise from us, other than that we shall set about doing what we can toward saving the vessel and your own useless lives?"

"We could not expect you to do more."

"And you have no reason to suppose we will do even that much. But what I am driving at is that once we are free it will be a dangerous piece of business if any of you should try to make a prisoner of me again. After we are on deck it will be your lives or ours, if you attempt to interfere with our movements in any way."

"You needn't be afraid of my trying to do anything of the kind, and I can speak for one of my mates. As matters look now we've but precious little show of getting on shore unaided, and I don't want any more part in such work as has already been done on board this schooner."

"Does Barnes know of the proposition you are making?"

"I told him; but it is a question whether he understood or not."

"Cast off these ropes, and we'll go on deck."

Clark made no delay in obeying the order.

The thunder was almost continuous, and the lightning came so rapidly as to illumine the cabin, save at brief intervals.

It was such a storm as I had never known, and little wonder that the mutineers were ready to ask assistance even from those they had injured.

Once the lashings were removed it was necessary we should chafe our arms and legs vigorously several moments before it was possible to use them, for the ropes had been drawn so tightly as to stop the circulation of blood, and we were temporarily crippled.

Thad was the first to regain the use of his limbs, and I hobbled after him as he ascended the companionway, for there was in my mind the fear lest Barnes, seeing we had been set free, should make an attempt to drive us back, in which case I was determined to do battle even to the death.

At this moment life seemed to be of but little account.

Thanks to the flashes of lightning we could distinguish surrounding objects with reasonable distinctness, and before many seconds had passed there was in my heart a hymn of thanksgiving that He who watches even the sparrows fall had not permitted serious disaster to come upon us.

True it was that the Laughing Mary was hard and fast aground; but she could not have been in a more easy and safe position had she been steered by careful hands to her present resting place.

On what shore we were I knew not; but it seemed certain there were no inhabitants near by, otherwise we must have seen something in the shape of houses, and looking over the rail when the lightning was most vivid, I learned that the little vessel rested on a sandy beach.

It was not likely she had so much as scraped the paint from her bottom. The surf which beat against the stern, sounding so heavy while we were in the cabin, was a matter which need cause little uneasiness, for as

yet the waves were not running high, and the tide was falling every moment.

"She is as sound as a nut, and save for the labor of launching her, no worse off than when we left port," Thad whispered to me, gripping my hand in token of thankfulness.

The mutineers did not appear to be astonished at seeing us after we had been made such close prisoners. In fact, I question whether several of them were really aware of our being on deck, so frenzied were they with terror.

Barnes was running forward and aft like a madman, giving heed neither to his comrades nor us, while the cook, his sallow face illumined by the lightning until it was the color of sulphur, stood in the galley trembling so violently that I could see the quaking of his limbs even while I remained near the companionway aft.

Sam joined us before I had taken in all the surroundings, and an exclamation of surprise and joy burst from his lips as he realized our position.

"They simply let the wind put her ashore," he said.

"She must have been headed fair for the land with all sails full, to have gone so high on," I suggested, and then came the question in my mind as to how near might be the British fleet.

Now more eagerly than ever I scanned the waters when the lights in the heavens flashed out brightly.

I could see no forest of spars as would have been the case if Lord Howe's fleet was within our range of vision, and even had the darkness been unrelieved by the lightning, the riding-lights of the warships should have been seen were they within a circle of three miles—perhaps more.

"We are as like to be above the Hook as below it," Thad said, and I understood that he also had been searching with his eyes for the enemy.

"There is no knowing how many times the schooner was put about after the breeze freshened enough to scare the traitors, and from whatever point they lost command of her she must have scudded in the same direction as the wind. Allowing that it held on from the same direction as when you were

on deck, we should be somewhere near the Hook or Gravesend."

"Wherever we may be it is necessary to wait for daylight and the tide," Sam suggested. "There is nothing we can do, nor any danger of the schooner's breaking up, for in an hour or more she will be lying high and dry."

"And between now and daylight we have considerable work before us," Thad said cheerily, as if all our troubles were at an end. "Once these villains realize that there is nothing of which to be afraid, they will turn their attention to us in order to save their own necks, and when that moment comes we must be fully prepared. Just now they believe death to be close at hand, and we may do much as we please."

"If you have any plan in your head, explain it," and I could not prevent myself from speaking in a tone of irritation, so nervous was I lest the opportunity we now had to regain our liberty should be lost through our own negligence.

Thad reflected so long before speaking that I was nigh to railing at him because of

his moderation, and when he finally explained I could have thrown my arms around him for very joy, so perfect was the plan proposed.

"The soldiers' arms, and all the ammunition are of course in the hold. These must be secured first, and once that has been done we three will stand a better chance in case of a battle. Then we have but to remain together, and if the Laughing Mary is not in our possession, or we in position to take her whenever we choose after sunrise, it will be only because the British fleet are nearer than we now think. Sam, you go to the pump; make all possible noise while working it. There is likely bilge-water enough to give a brave show of a leak. 'Liphalet, take one of the axes, follow me into the hold, and then pay no attention to what I am doing; but burst your way through the bulkhead into the cabin. That done, help me carry the weapons and ammunition aft."

There was no need for him to explain more; I understood how readily we might gain the whip hand providing the traitors did not take it into their heads to follow us to the hold,

and I had little fear of any save Clark, who appeared to be the coolest-headed among them all.

As I read over what is here set down it is evident I have failed signally in trying to picture the scene.

One would suppose from the words that while my comrade and I had been talking the Laughing Mary was resting quietly on the sands, with nothing save the lightning to cause alarm.

The reality was far different, and wild in the extreme to one not accustomed to such things.

The beating of the surf against the schooner's stern, while not dangerous, was so loud as to give a landsman the idea that the timbers were being battered. The wind swept across the deck, tossing wildly every loose end of rope until it appeared as if the rigging was in tatters, and the rain seemed to come in sheets.

One needed to know something of seamanship to understand that all this apparent confusion was nothing more serious than noise.

When you add to the tumult of the storm

and the waves the shrieking of the terrified traitors, for they had not ceased their outcries save when forced to do so from sheer exhaustion, it can be better understood why they should be in a panic of fear while we were as calm as I have represented.

Once Thad had mapped out his plan we lost no time in carrying it into execution.

Held in straps under the overhanging roof of the cabin were axes, and one of these I unloosed as Thad shouted in a voice well calculated to increase rather than allay the terror of our late captors:

"Get to the pumps, Sam! Our lives may depend upon it! Follow me, Eliphalet, and work as you never have before! We have only to keep the schooner above water until daylight, and then all may be well!"

Even though the situation was so fraught with danger to ourselves—or would be when the mutineers came to their senses—I failed to keep a sober face as I dashed wildly forward to obey the order, for the idea of keeping the schooner above water when she could not have been driven by force of man deeper than she was excited my mirth.

As we descended the ladder which had been built from the deck to the hold for the accommodation of the soldiers, Clark shouted in a frenzied tone:

"Do you want any help? What can we do down there?"

"Nothing. Only a sailor can be of any use here; but those who are willing may tail on to the pump with Sam, for he'll need plenty of help between now and daylight."

There was no time for idle words just then, much as I would have liked to congratulate my comrade on the success of his plan.

In this portion of the schooner the glare of the lightning did not penetrate, and we were forced to grope around in dense darkness, fearing to spend such time as would be necessary to make a light lest some of the traitors should come below.

I felt my way aft toward the bulkhead, giving no heed to Thad's movements, and there by sense of touch found that portion of the planking which I believed would offer the least resistance to my efforts.

Owing to the thunder and the beating of the surf against the stern, I doubt if the

blows of the ax sounded in the ears of those on deck louder than the tapping of a hammer, and I struck right and left, cutting deep into the timbers at every blow—making no attempt at stifling the noise.

I don't think there is alive to-day any lad who could perform more quickly or more deftly Thad's portion of the task than he did.

That which he had set himself to do was far more difficult than my work, for I had simply to chop away at the timbers, and if a blow was made amiss it mattered little, while he must grope about in the darkness so black it was as if one could feel it, in search of the weapons, with no knowledge regarding their whereabouts.

Yet before I had half hewn my way through the bulkhead he brought an armful of powder-horns and shot-pouches, together with three or four muskets, laying down the whole at my feet as he whispered encouragingly:

"Everything is favoring us, 'Liphalet. I doubt if the blows of your ax can be heard on deck, and before those stupids gain an

idea of our plan we shall be prepared to meet them."

There seemed no question but that we should succeed in our purpose and by morning be in possession, or prepared to take possession whenever we chose, of the Laughing Mary.

But even then we would only be masters of a stranded schooner located, it might be, within a short distance of the British fleet, in which case we should soon be made prisoners again, for at the best it would require much time and labor to move the little vessel from her resting place.

However, I tried to put these thoughts from me, resolving to think only of the present needs, and determined to get the upper hands of the traitors whatever might be the cost.

Before Thad brought the second load I had effected such an entrance as would permit of my passing through the bulkhead after some difficulty, and clambering into the cabin, taking my ax with me, as can be fancied, lest it might serve one of the mutineers for a weapon, I stood there while my comrade

handed me the spoils he had collected until, as we firmly believed, all the muskets and ammunition of the soldiers had been removed from the hold.

"Now strike a light and see what you can do toward barricading the hole you have just made," Thad ordered. "I am going on deck."

"But it will arouse suspicion if you go back alone and a light is made in the cabin by me immediately afterward."

"I warrant you the cowards on deck will never think of the matter—certainly not till after they have gotten over their scare in a measure. By that time we care not how much is known of our work."

"There are three axes on deck which should be looked after, and the capstan bars——"

"I'll see to them. Stay here in the cabin till I call, and load the weapons as soon as you have lighted the candles."

Although it has taken long in the telling, I question if Thad and I were in the hold more than ten minutes, and during this time the storm continued with unabated fury; but the tumult on deck had subsided.

The traitors were either recovering from their fright or had become benumbed with terror.

The clang of the pump could be heard above the din of the surf, and while using the tinder-box I laughed as heartily as though there were no danger menacing, at the thought of those valiant soldiers turned pirates, toiling at the pumps to free a stranded schooner from bilge water.

After the candle was lighted I loaded three of the muskets, and stored the others, together with the ammunition, in my bunk.

It was a very respectable armory, the possession of which made us masters of the situation, unless I was much mistaken in the temper of the traitors.

While they were the possessors of firearms and we unarmed, the whole boiling of them could be very courageous; but now I fancied that even a show of the unloaded muskets would bring a panic upon them, and my mirth increased until it was almost boisterous when Sam came down the companion-way.

"You are making merry, 'Liphalet, even

though we are ashore and with a crew of mutineers aboard."

"One can well afford to be merry after having tricked in so simple a manner the gallant Corporal Barnes and his lieutenant, the cook. It was no more than child's play to turn the tables on them, and I am eager for the moment to come when they shall understand what has been done."

"Perhaps then you won't feel so much like laughing, for if it so chance the Britishers know where the schooner lays we shall likely remain with Lord Howe's fleet longer than will be pleasant."

I was sobered instantly.

That my comrade should have the same forebodings as I had tried to banish made it appear as if they must be true, and for the moment I saw myself a prisoner, confined between the decks of one of the frigates.

Understanding how thoroughly he had quenched my joy, Sam made haste to say:

"There is no reason, 'Liphalet, why we should cross a bridge before we come to it. It is not certain we are any nearer the British than we are our friends, and until

that question is settled we'll get all the satisfaction possible out of knowing that the brave Corporal Barnes has been so easily fooled. Those fellows are working the pump brakes as though their lives depended upon it, while Thad is running here and there busy as a bee in doing nothing."

"But he was to look out for the axes and capstan-bars."

"I brought some of them down myself," and Sam pointed behind him. "The corporal's guard are getting a little the best of their fear; but Thad will finish his work before they are in fighting trim, and then we will give them as heavy a dose as is needed."

"Are we to stay here?"

"So Thad said, and if any of the traitors happen to come below, it is our duty to truss them up after the same fashion they did us."

We were not so fortunate as to cage any of the birds, and when ten minutes or more had passed Thad came into the cabin staggering under the weight of the belaying pins.

"It may be we shall have trouble sooner than I expected," he said, throwing his burden into one of the bunks. "Barnes looked

as if he was growing suspicious when I passed him; but now that we are prepared for work he can open the battle whenever he sees fit, and the sport won't begin any too quickly to please me."

CHAPTER IX.

TURNING THE TABLES.

THE storm cleared away as suddenly as it had begun.

While my comrades and I were speaking of the possible fact that Corporal Barnes was beginning to suspect we might have been doing more to aid ourselves than to save the schooner, the rain ceased falling, and the wind was hushed.

Now had come the time when the traitors might see for themselves that the Laughing Mary was in no danger of foundering, and I was not minded to remain below when that discovery was made.

"We should be on deck," I said, going toward the companionway, a loaded musket in hand. "There will be a rush aft when the villains understand how we have tricked them, and we must not allow ourselves to be shut up here."

"'Liphalet is right," and Thad seized a weapon as if until that instant he had forgotten it might be necessary to use one. "We will make our stand aft on the deck, where we can at the same time keep our eyes on this opening," and he pointed to the aperture I had made through the bulkhead. "It is at this place that the danger is greatest, and each must watch out on it sharply."

I remained in the cabin only so long as was needed to hear these words, and then ran on deck, arriving there none too soon, as it appeared to me.

Barnes had at that instant ordered the men to cease pumping, and said angrily as he pointed toward the shore:

"Look over the rail if you want to understand how much need there is to work at that job. We are high and dry on the sand."

With exclamations of surprise the fellows ran to the rail, and there, now that the storm clouds no longer darkened the sky, they could readily see how comfortably the Laughing Mary was situated.

Each man in turn looked aft at us after

learning he had been tricked, and I fancied from the different expressions on their faces it was possible to decide who among them we might count on for help under certain circumstances.

Clark, after gazing at the shore and realizing that they had been working the pumps of a craft which was already sunken as deep as possible, burst into a loud laugh as he turned toward us who were lounging about with our weapons concealed behind the rise of the companionway.

A man who could see anything comical in the way the tables had turned upon himself would not be a very dangerous enemy, and I watched intently the face of each, for by this time the clouds had been blown from the sky until it was possible to distinguish surrounding objects almost as clearly as if by moonlight.

Clark and one other were the only men who laughed when they realized the situation, and I at once decided that it would not be a hard task to win them back from Barnes.

When the cook began to have an idea of the trick he was almost beside himself with

rage. His sallow face seemed to take on a greenish tinge as he shook his clinched fist in the air; but he did not so much as look at us after the first quick, furtive glance.

It must not be supposed that we three remained aft of the companionway amusing ourselves by watching the traitors when the truth dawned upon them.

Had we been in less danger all this would have been extremely entertaining, but now we gazed at the men rather for the purpose of trying to detect what was to be their first move.

It can well be imagined that the chief thought in our minds was as to how near might be the British fleet, and when the clouds broke we gazed anxiously in every direction.

As before, we could see nothing to cause alarm, but we knew only too well that the rise of the land on which we were stranded might hide the ships from view, and when day dawned it was not impossible we should find ourselves within easy striking distance of the lion's paw.

The first evidence that the traitors had

recovered from their terror and bewilderment sufficiently to be ripe for more mischief was shown when Barnes, as if seized by a sudden thought, quickly descended the ladder to his quarters in the hold, and seeing it, I whispered to Thad:

"The villain is beginning to understand what we may have done, and we shall soon get an idea of his temper."

"Step halfway down the stairs," Thad said in a low tone to Sam. "Keep your eye on the bulkhead, and fire if the scoundrel shows himself there. Take careful aim, for we must shoot with good purpose when the work begins; to miss your mark would encourage the traitors to make a sudden rush."

I kept my eyes fixed steadily upon the group forward, determined they should not catch us napping, and expecting an attack each instant; but in this I was disappointed.

Barnes was even more cowardly than we had supposed.

He could play the pirate while the odds were all in his favor, but when the chances were equal he had no desire to risk his worthless life.

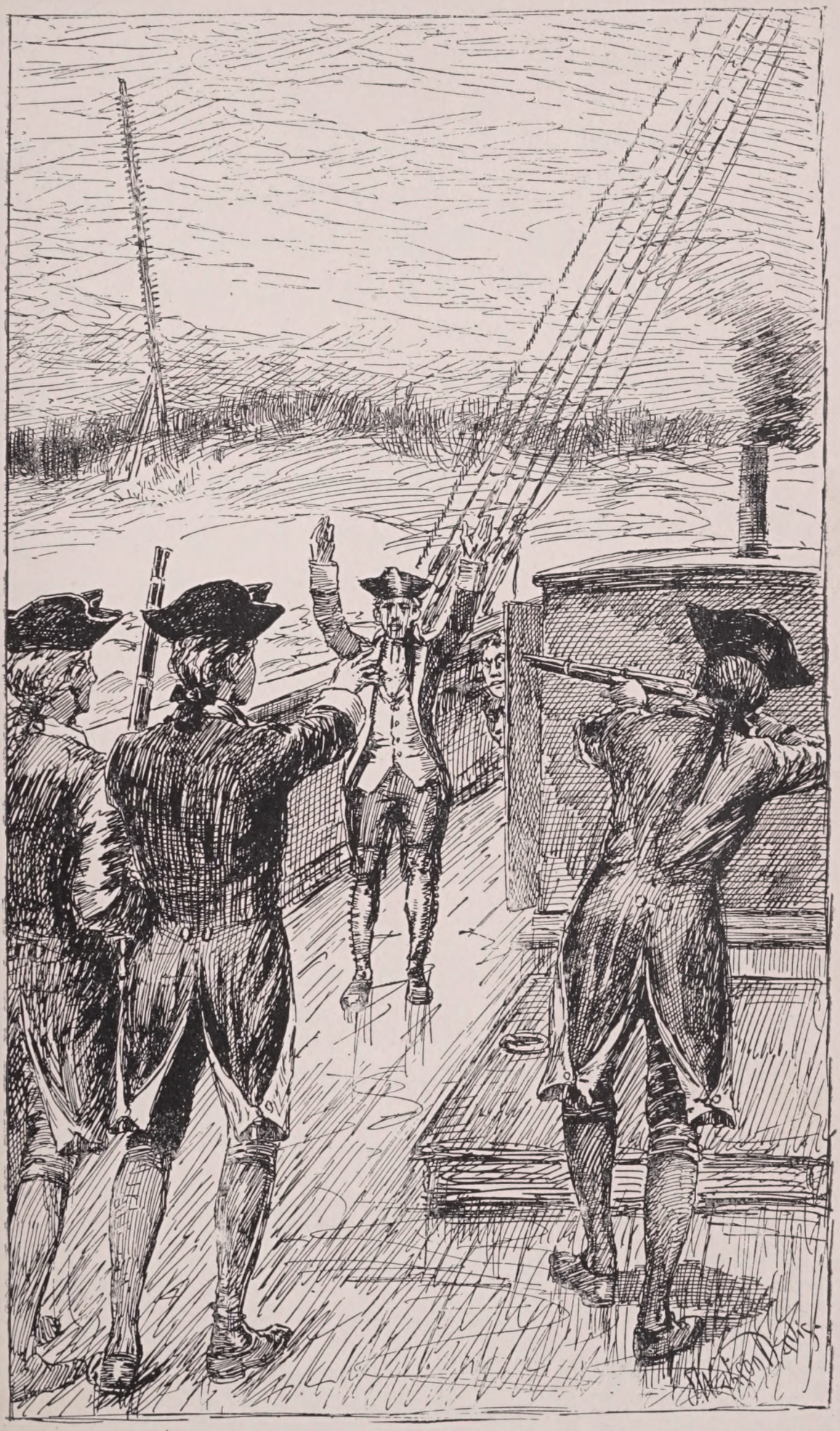
Instead of attempting to enter the cabin through the bulkhead, he returned to the deck after learning, as he must have done, that the weapons had been seized, and whispered eagerly to his fellows.

Then we were treated to an exhibition of silent rage, not one of the pirates daring to so much as raise his voice.

"They are cowed now," Thad whispered to me, "and we must take good care to keep them in that condition. Do not make a boasting display of your musket, but look to it that they see you are armed and determined to shoot."

I did as he commanded, though there was little need, for the mutineers could not but know we were in possession of all the weapons, and immediately they moved further forward as if fearing we would open fire upon them.

Sam was recalled from his post on the companionway stairs, for the scoundrels would not be able to get into the hold without our knowledge, and we three stood, muskets in hand, waiting for the next move, which could not be long delayed even though



"HALT THERE!" THAD SHOUTED, WHEN THE MAN WAS FIVE OR SIX FEET FORWARD OF THE MAIN HATCH.

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every man among them was as cowardly as we knew Barnes to be.

We were not kept long in suspense.

After they had discussed the situation in whispers for five minutes or more Clark came forward, holding his hands above his head to show he was unarmed.

"Halt there!" Thad shouted when the man was five or six feet forward of the main hatch, and in order that there might be no delay in obeying the command, he raised his musket. Clark suddenly stood still, but remained silent, and after a brief pause Thad asked impatiently:

"What do you want?"

"To make a bargain whereby we agree to let you go free."

"It strikes me we can't be more free than we are now," Thad replied with a laugh. "But why are you making the proposition? Has your leader suddenly grown dumb?"

Clark knew not what reply to make, but turned toward his companions, when, as if moving much against his will, the corporal advanced until he stood by the soldier's side.

"Rest your muskets over the cabin deck,

and take careful aim," the captain said in a tone so loud that the mutineers could not fail to hear. "Let each cover a man, and fire without waiting for further command if either of them advances so much as an inch."

"What are you doing that for?" Barnes cried in alarm as he stepped back a pace. "We don't count on fighting."

"I reckon you are speaking the truth now; but don't intend to take any chances when dealing with traitors. There is nothing to fear unless you attempt to play some trick, therefore the fact that Sam and 'Liphalet are ready for business need not disturb you."

For the moment I believed Barnes would beat a cowardly retreat; he even made a motion as if to back away to the shelter of the galley, but a few words, accompanied by a meaning gesture, from Clark induced him to remain.

"I am waiting to hear what you have to say," Thad cried sharply as the mutineers remained silent.

Clark turned toward his leader, but the corporal did not open his mouth, and the soldier said angrily:

"He wants to make a trade with you, but if he can't speak we may as well go forward again, for I don't relish standing here while those muskets are aimed at me."

"You can please yourselves. There is no trade we are anxious to make, although I am willing to hear what such villains may have to say."

"Why don't you make your talk?" the cook cried angrily from behind the galley, and these words from the yellow-faced traitor who wished to turn pirate liberated the corporal's tongue.

"We are willing to give you fellows your liberty if you will agree to our terms," Barnes cried, speaking very loud, as if the sound of his voice would give him courage.

"You are very kind," Thad replied mockingly; "but I believe that just now we are more at liberty than you. What are your terms?"

"You shall be allowed to go on shore, and we agree not to fire upon or follow you if our muskets are given up."

"And suppose we refuse, thinking that a one-sided bargain?"

"Then the British will soon make short work of you."

"Perhaps so, if they are anywhere near; but so far we haven't heard very much from them."

"They can't be far away, and it won't be a long job for one of us to tell them where the schooner is stranded. Think you they would leave her here unharmed?"

"Most likely not; but I have yet to learn that they can be told of our plight."

"One of us can carry the information, no matter where they may be, for we didn't leave New York Bay during the storm."

"That is true, you sneaking traitor, and it is also true that neither you nor any member of your party can leave this vessel without our permission. The first man who makes an attempt at going over the rail will be killed."

"Perhaps there may be no need of our trying to do anything of the kind," Barnes replied after a pause, and I fancied it had not entered into his calculations until Thad spoke that we might prevent them from leaving the schooner. "When the sun rises

you may find Lord Howe's fleet within gunshot."

"In which case we shall be made prisoners of war by the British admiral, which is a far different matter from that of two hours ago."

Barnes stepped back as if to consult with his companions, and Clark followed the example, thus giving Sam and I an opportunity of rising to our feet, of which we took immediate advantage, for it was not comfortable kneeling there with muskets sighted, realizing that at any moment it might become necessary to fire with accurate aim.

While one could have counted twenty Thad remained slightly in advance of us, waiting for the traitors to return to the conference, and then, as they gave no sign of resuming the business, he called out sharply:

"Now it is my turn to say a word, and I want all you scoundrels to hear, otherwise some of the rules I am going to make may be broken, in which case ignorance would mean death."

The mutineers showed themselves from behind the galley, but did not advance nearer.

"We have all the weapons and ammunition and full authority, because of having been placed in command of this vessel, to shoot down without warning any who may try to hinder us in the performance of duty. As a matter of fact I should be warranted, and perhaps will be blamed for not thus doing, in settling this matter by killing every one of you; but that would be too much like your own way of arranging matters. Therefore you shall have a chance for life. First, any man who tries to leave this schooner without my permission will be fired at, and we shall take good aim. The same penalty attaches to an attempt to come aft further than you now are, unless especially summoned."

Thad paused, and the cook said with a whine:

"How long do you count on keeping us here?"

"So long as it pleases me, and now I have something to say directly to you. How great a supply of provisions have we on board?"

"I don't know."

"You can guess if it is enough to provide us with food for one day, or one week."

"Perhaps there are six days' full rations here."

"Where are they?"

"Mostly in the fore-peak."

"How much have you in the galley?"

"The fresh meat and vegetables."

"Set about cooking it at once, and if so much as a pound is wasted or spoiled, you shall suffer for it."

The cook delayed as if trying to decide whether he would obey or not, until Thad raised his musket.

"If you are not out of that before I can count ten, we shall open fire on the whole crowd." This threat was sufficient to make the fellow move, for his companions took it upon themselves to see that the command was obeyed, and he advanced sulkily.

"Boil the meat, and while it is being done make all the bread you can. I shall be the judge of whether you loiter in the task or not."

The cook entered the galley.

There could be no question but that we

had cowed the mutineers for the time being; but I was at a loss to understand the meaning of Thad's move so far as concerned the food.

It seemed to me, thick-headed as I am, that our first task should be to set about getting the schooner off the shore, and this messing with the provisions appeared to me little better than child's play; but I soon realized how wise was my comrade.

A moment later Barnes would have followed the cook, but that Thad stopped him very suddenly by shouting:

"Ready, Sam! Fire if he comes nearer!"

"I was only going into the galley," the corporal cried as he came to a full stop.

"You were warned against coming further aft, and in the future one or the other of us will fire at first sight of you without giving the word."

Barnes disappeared, and Sam said in a low tone:

"It seems to me we would be in better shape by obliging them to remain in full view. No one knows what they may be up to while hidden by the galley."

"We'll have them out in line after a time; but for awhile I don't care to have them watching our movements."

"What was your idea in setting the cook to work?" I asked.

"We have no use for raw meat."

"Neither do we care to eat at one meal all he has on hand."

"Very true; but we propose to have everything in our possession. Suppose Barnes had it in his power to destroy the rations, how long could we hold out?"

I now understood full well why the cook had been set to work.

Thad ever had his wits about him, and this was but another proof of the fact.

He had spoken as if we might remain on board some time guarding the mutineers, and now while we had nothing better with which to occupy our time I thought it a good opportunity to learn what he proposed doing, therefore asked for an explanation.

"We must keep those fellows with us until the schooner is afloat, providing we are able to accomplish that work, for as Barnes said, the British are somewhere in the neighbor-

hood, and will pay us a visit if the position of the Laughing Mary is known."

"When day comes they may find out that much without assistance," Sam suggested.

"True, and yet again it is possible we can remain concealed, therefore we'll keep a tight rein over the traitorous crew. I intend, providing we are allowed to work unmolested, that they shall aid in launching the schooner; but before that task be begun it stands us in hand to be prepared. All the provisions must be brought aft, and we will deal out such rations as we think necessary. If the fellows turn to heartily, they shall be well fed; but if any one indulges in shirking, or fails to do his best, he will go hungry. All this is with the belief we are some distance from Lord Howe's fleet, and shall not be molested. In case the enemy discover us we can do no better than submit."

Then Thad ordered Sam and I to go into the fore-peak, which could be gained only through the hold, and begin the work of bringing the stores aft.

His part was to remain on deck and keep our precious crew in subjection.

"Do not lay down your muskets for an instant," he said as we were descending the companionway stairs; "and at the first suspicious sound from the deck one is to come up through the cabin, while the other remains in the hold to prevent the villains from effecting an entrance there. Should they get below, we would have hard work to keep our own."

We had no desire to delay in our portion of the task.

Although we were seemingly masters of the situation, no one could say that the tables might not be suddenly turned by some accident, and it would go hard with us if we should again find ourselves in the corporal's power.

The cook had made a poor guess when he said we had six days' rations on hand, as Sam and I soon learned.

Although I was a poor judge of such matters, it seemed positive to me nine persons—the number now on board the Laughing Mary—would on ordinary allowance dispose of the entire stock in forty-eight hours.

The supply in the galley I could not esti-

mate; but the store here in the hold was at the best so small that I believed Thad should know of what it consisted at once, and I made a report accordingly as soon as we had obeyed orders.

He seemed startled by the information, and after reflecting on the matter a moment, said:

"I must make certain how much there is in the galley. Come forward with me, keeping your muskets ready, and remember that in case a rush is made we must check it at once or be overcome. If those fellows had the courage of cats we would soon be prisoners again."

As we marched forward the mutineers, hearing our footsteps, peered out from behind the galley as if afraid we were about to do them some harm, but other than that no move was made.

Although we had done little more than bluster, they were subdued as though each had received a sound flogging.

When we had approached where it was possible to have a view of the interior of the galley, we saw the sallow-faced cook sitting

indolently on a locker with folded arms, having apparently made no effort to obey the captain's orders, and I said to myself that here was the only man among all the mutineers whom we had cause to fear. Although not overstocked with courage, he dared do many things which would have frightened Barnes, and might be an ugly customer to deal with at close quarters.

Thad pushed open the half-closed door, and asked in a quiet tone which had in it more of menace than could have been crowded into an hour of bluster:

"Have you done that which I ordered?"

"No," the cook began in a surly way, and then, on seeing the three of us standing in front of him with leveled muskets, he suddenly changed his manner, adding in a respectful tone, "I am waiting for the fire to start up."

"Where is the meat you are about to boil?"

He took from a locker nearly a whole sheep cut into quarters, and laid it on the bench which was used for such purpose.

"Get it ready for the pot at once, and then set about making bread. I shall be sorry if

there is any delay in this work, for I do not like to cause any one trouble; but until we arrive once more in New York it is my firm resolve to inflict punishment upon those who neglect their duty, and, situated as we are now, I can only enforce discipline with powder and lead. There will be no sparing of ammunition if signs of insubordination are shown."

Having said this in a tone as mild as any girl's, Thad walked aft, motioning us to follow, and once we were where our voices could not be overheard, I cautioned him against giving the cook the slightest opportunity to do harm.

"He is a dangerous man," I said in conclusion, "and all the more so because he will strike from behind, rather than meet a fellow face to face."

"I believe you, 'Liphalet," Thad replied gravely. "That we shall have trouble with the cook before we're many hours older I do not doubt; but he won't catch me napping, and if an example is to be made of any of the crew I would rather it should be Barnes or that yellow-faced scoundrel we tackle."

CHAPTER X.

PELEG SYMONDS.

UNTIL daylight we three remained aft on the alert for the slightest show of mischief on the part of the mutineers; but seeing nothing to betoken that they had other desire than to do as we commanded, yet knowing full well should an opportunity arise when Barnes believed the odds to be in his favor, an attack would be made upon us immediately.

Twice during the remainder of the night did the three of us march forward to the galley; but there was no further reason to reprove the cook for neglect of duty.

He had worked industriously since Thad hinted that his only means of enforcing obedience was with powder and lead, and in fact, he was right in so doing, for at the first sign of trouble he and Barnes were the ones who would be used as targets for our bullets,

since these two being out of the way the soldiers would speedily abandon all idea of insubordination.

The one fear in our minds was, as can well be imagined, that we had been stranded within easy range of the British fleet, and when the gloom of night began to give way before the shafts of gray light sent to warn the world that a new day was about to dawn, we gazed anxiously out over the waters for some signs of the enemy.

I had decided in my own mind that we were beached in Gowanus Cove, and was strengthened in this belief when, the sun having risen, nothing met our gaze but a broad expanse of water.

If the Laughing Mary was in the position I fancied, the high land of Brooklyn Heights would shut us off from a view of the Narrows, where was the British fleet, but we could not hope to remain undiscovered very many hours because of the fact that the enemy were constantly sending out boat expeditions for the purpose of reconnoitering.

My comrades shared this opinion with me, as I learned when Thad said after a long

time of silence, during which he had been aloft twice scanning the surrounding land and waters:

"We should be in the Cove, and there yet remains a chance we shall be able to get out of the scrape before the Britishers discover us. The tide will be at its height in a couple of hours, and we must take advantage of it at that moment, or wait until night comes again."

"There is little chance the schooner can be floated this afternoon," Sam replied. "If we had a boat in which to carry out the anchors it might be different, but we shall hardly build a raft stout enough for our purpose in that length of time."

"Then we will trust to remaining undiscovered during this day, and make the most of our time. 'Liphalet, go forward and tell the cook he is to have breakfast ready at once. Let him serve out some boiled meat, bread, and anything else he may have ready. While you stand guard Sam will bring aft all the remainder of the cooked provisions which remain in the galley."

I obeyed without loss of time, carrying my

musket in such manner that it could be discharged on the instant, and halting ten paces abaft the galley, for I had no idea of giving the yellow-faced scoundrel an opportunity of leaping upon me.

The cook saw me advancing, of that I was certain, yet he would make me believe him to be ignorant of my whereabouts until I repeated the captain's orders in a loud tone.

Then he started in surprise, and appeared as if about to come out of the galley; but I halted him at once, saying as I did so:

"There is no reason why you should leave that place; remain where you are, and set about the work at once."

He made no reply, and, unable to determine exactly what he was doing, I had no other resource than to believe the order was being obeyed.

The fellow was not so passive when Sam approached for the purpose of carrying aft such of the provisions as might not be needed for the morning meal.

"How am I to say what part of this the men will want?" he asked in a surly tone,

flourishing a huge knife with which he had been cutting the meat.

"Drop that!" I cried, and the coward obeyed on the instant, when Thad, who had overheard all that was said, shouted:

"Set out the regular rations, but no more, and send the remainder here."

For a moment I believed he would refuse to do as he was bidden, and had my finger on the trigger of the musket ready to shoot him down at the first suspicious movement; but he evidently knew who would be the first to suffer if there was any show of resistance, and began to push toward the door certain articles of food.

"None of that!" Sam cried sharply. "I don't count on taking any chances from such as you have shown yourself to be."

"What do you want?"

"You to hand me the stuff through the doorway."

I saw Barnes' ugly face peering out from behind the galley, but a single movement of the musket was sufficient hint for him to hide it again very quickly, and by this time Sam was going aft with his hands full.

Three times did my comrade take a load from the galley, and then the cook swore he had given all the provisions save what would be needed for breakfast.

Then Thad ordered me aft, and when I was by his side, Sam yet being in the cabin stowing the food away, the captain shouted:

"Now you fellows forward will come one at a time to get your rations. Be careful not to loiter at the galley; but move lively."

It was not necessary to repeat the command.

Clark was the first to show himself, and he took good care we should see he did not speak with the cook.

Then, one after another, the soldiers came to the galley door until only Barnes remained unserved.

"Step out, corporal, and be quick about it, unless you count on fasting till noon," Thad cried, and Barnes showed himself at once.

I knew he would try to have speech with the cook, and stood ready to prevent it.

The fellow slouched out from behind the galley, trying to appear unconcerned, and

halted at the door of the cookhouse in such a position we could not see his face.

"Turn half around, corporal!" Thad shouted, quick to note the possibilities. "I don't intend you shall have a chance to hold a conference with your mate while we have the upper hands."

Barnes glanced over his shoulder furtively, but seeing me with leveled musket, wheeled about in proper shape, and I can answer for it that he spoke no word to the one whom of all the others I most feared.

Then Sam and I went forward for our rations and Thad's, and during the next ten minutes or more all hands gave strict attention to the meal.

When we who were aft had satisfied hunger, all three went to the galley.

The cook was ordered to come out on deck, and while Sam and I stood where we could cover him with our weapons and at the same time be on the alert against a possible attack from the others, Thad made a thorough search of the place.

He found hidden in this spot or that a greater amount of provisions than had been

sent aft, and when the entire store was set out on the deck the captain said sternly to the mutinous villain:

"I felt certain you had done something of this kind, although I don't know what you expected to gain by it. Situated as we three are it would be folly to keep warning you fellows and never acting. From this moment if you give me cause for suspicion I shall first have you shot down like a dog, and then inquire into the matter. It is your lives against ours, and I will take no chances."

At this moment I believe I could have killed the cook and never accused myself of blood-guiltiness. While he was allowed to plot our lives were not safe a single moment, and it seemed necessary to put him where he could work no more mischief.

Sam shared my opinion, for when the fellow had gone into the galley again in obedience to Thad's orders, he asked in a low tone:

"Why not truss the cook and Barnes up as they did us, and leave them where they can't be freed by the others?"

"Because I propose that they do their full

share of the work in getting the schooner afloat. We need all hands in the labor, and they shall not be allowed to lie still from now out, until we are either in deep water, or the British have made of the Laughing Mary a prize."

All this required that we keep the mutineers within reach of a musket-ball every moment, and would make our own share of the work so much the harder, but I knew from Thad's manner of speaking that he could not be persuaded to do other than was announced, and held my peace.

It is not necessary I should set down here all which was done this day.

We three comrades stood hourly watches in turn over the laborers, and at such times were ever ready to fire upon the first of the mutineers who disobeyed orders.

The cook and Barnes were forced to perform even more than their full share of the work, and at no time did we allow them to approach each other sufficiently near to hold a conversation.

The first task was to make a raft heavy enough for the work, and then both anchors

were loaded on it, together with all the cable we had aboard.

When these had been carried into deep water and there thrown over, the cables were brought to the windlass, where the slack was taken in until they were as taut as we could contrive to make them.

It was nearly noon before this portion of the task was done, and then the tide had ebbed for at least two hours.

Dinner was served from the cabin, Sam bringing up each man's rations as he came aft to receive it, and all were forced to remain on deck in front of the galley where we could keep them well in view.

When the short morning had come to an end every movable thing on board was brought aft, for there remained plenty of water under the keel at this point.

I should say the afternoon was half spent when we had done all that was possible until the tide rose again, and during this time we saw nothing to cause alarm.

Not even so much as a boat had come within our range of vision, and it no longer seemed possible we had gone ashore in

Gowanus Cove, otherwise the enemy must have shown himself in some manner.

The mutineers were allowed to lounge around the deck much as they chose providing all hands remained well in view, and the two whom we looked upon as ringleaders kept each by himself at such a distance from the others that no private conversation could be held.

Barnes, cowed by our display of weapons, had obeyed every command, but from the look in his eyes we knew full well what sweet revenge he would take should the chance present itself.

The cook was no less submissive and sulky; as ready to take advantage of us as we were determined not to give either him or his fellows an opportunity.

It was dreary work remaining idle, watching every movement of the mutineers lest when we least suspected it they would begin an assault.

Had I been in command of the schooner I would have bound each in such a fashion that there would be no possibility of mischief, and this even though they were needed when

the moment arrived for us to set about pulling the Laughing Mary off the shore.

Once during the afternoon I suggested such a plan to Thad; but he would not listen to it, and even Sam appeared doubtful if it would be wise until the schooner was afloat, urging against it that at present we had the fellows in such condition as to be able to make them work, whereas it was hardly probable they would be of the same mind after being trussed up several hours.

It was not for me to urge the matter while both my comrades were against it, and I held my peace.

The tide was within about two hours of being at its height, and we were still watching our prisoners as cats watch mice, when from around the point of what we believed to be the mainland a boat appeared, rowed by one man.

For a single moment it was as if my heart leaped into my throat, and I could scarcely breathe because of fear and excitement, but when I noted the welcome fact that he did not wear a red coat my courage returned.

"Boat ahoy!" Thad shouted, and as he did

so the mutineers sprang to their feet, believing, perhaps, that the Britishers had found us at last.

"Keep back!" Thad cried. "The first one who speaks to this stranger will wish he had kept his mouth shut!"

All obeyed save the cook, who continued to advance toward the rail, and the captain cried out for me to fire.

The fellow dropped to the deck before I could press the trigger; but I had already aimed so high above his head that I knew the ball would not hit him, and, thinking it would teach the scoundrel a good lesson, discharged the weapon.

I believe of a truth the coward thought he was shot, for he rolled as if in mortal agony, and his face took on a green tinge which was sickening to look upon.

Even I feared my aim had been truer than was intended, and for the instant was sick at heart with the thought of having fired upon an unarmed man; but this sensation had no sooner come upon me than I realized he was only badly frightened, and so told Thad.

"Keep your eyes on them, and don't hesi-

tate to shoot again," he said in a tone such as all might hear. "If you have disabled one we shall have so much the less work to do in the way of guarding them, and can spare a few more as well as not."

Any one hearing this remark would have said the captain was as vindictive as a pirate; but I understood full well he had no desire to stain his hands with blood unless it should be absolutely necessary in the saving of our own lives.

Frightened by the report of the musket, and perhaps thinking it was intended for him, the stranger began to pull his boat around in a hurry, and might have left us then and there but that Thad implored him to wait.

"This schooner belongs to the Continental army, and has been cast ashore by those who would deliver her up to the enemy," he shouted, and Sam and I looked at each other in alarm that he should have told so much before learning whether the stranger was friend or foe.

"If he's an enemy he'd give information of our plight anyway," Thad said as if reading

our thoughts, "therefore we can work ourselves no harm."

The man looked at us intently a moment, and then began to row cautiously toward the schooner once more, but while yet at a considerable distance asked:

"If you are friends how does it happen that you got past the fleet?"

"Are we past it?" Thad cried in surprise.

"I should say you was, seein's how this is Barren Island, an' there's quite a stretch of water 'twixt here an' the Narrows."

Barren Island! If the man's statement was true the Laughing Mary must have passed through Lord Howe's fleet while we three were prisoners in the cabin, and the mutineers had not so much as seen the riding-lights of the vessels.

It seemed impossible such could be the fact, and yet the man spoke with an honest voice. He could well understand that we were bewildered, but before trusting himself too near, asked when we left New York.

Thad told him, and then in the fewest words possible explained what had happened on board, saying in conclusion:

"If you be a friend to the cause, as I believe, come on board and I will show you our written orders from Colonel Tupper to go to Governor's Island, and also the order from Colonel Prescott of that post to the commandant of Fort Defiance."

"Where are the mutineers?"

"Here on deck, kept in subjection by our muskets, as you can see by coming aboard."

The stranger hung in the wind a moment longer, and then seeming to gather courage from the fact of our being boys, pulled alongside.

Thad took his painter, and as he came over the rail aft his face expressed the liveliest surprise at a view of the mutineers.

"It looks like as if you boys had done a mighty neat job in gettin' the best of that crowd, an' I allow it was a cute trick."

"But one that won't count for much if the Britishers happen to learn we are here," Thad said grimly.

"There's small chance of that for a spell yet. Lord Howe is makin' a move, an' I reckon his hands are too full to let him bother with this craft——"

"Has he sailed up to the city?" Sam asked in alarm.

"No, an' that seems odd. He is landin' the troops in Gravesend Bay, an' most likely counts on makin' it hot for General Putnam's troops on the Heights."

"This should be told to our friends in the city!" Thad cried excitedly, and then as he realized how helpless we were to do anything of the kind, he exclaimed sorrowfully, "It was in my mind to try to get back last night, without waiting to take the cannon aboard! Would that I had done it!"

"There's no use in cryin' for milk that's been spilled," the stranger said. "I've been tryin' to do that same job myself, but haven't made much of a fist at it so far."

"You couldn't have tried very hard if you were willing to waste time pulling around here."

"I saw the schooner's spars, an' hoped she might be some craft that had run in waitin' for a chance to sneak up past the fleet."

"And suppose she had been?"

"I'd have done my best to coax the captain into makin' a try of it this night."

Thad looked at Sam and me, and then asked as if speaking to himself:

"Why can't we try that very thing? If there is any wind at all we should be able to do it, although the chances are against us."

"But you're hard and fast aground," the stranger objected.

"Look at our cables. We've carried out both anchors; it must have been two hours past high water when she took the ground, and we ought to make short work of pulling her off when the tide is full."

"What's your name?" the man asked after gazing critically at the schooner's position.

Thad answered the question, and then told him who Sam and I were, winding up the information by asking:

"Who may you be, sir?"

"Peleg Symonds, an' I'm no 'sir,' but an honest fisherman who would have turned soldier long before this but that I've got a wife an' four children to look after."

"Do you know the location of the fleet?"

"As well as I do the channel. With the city market shut out from me, I've been forced to sell to the Britishers, an' cruised

in an' out among the war vessels till I could put this craft through with my eyes shut."

"Will you try it?" Thad asked excitedly. "If we are successful I guarantee you shall be paid more money than could be earned by a week of fishing."

"I'm willin' to make the venture for the good of the cause, an' only ask that you give me grub enough to keep the family from starvin'."

"Take what you want from here, if it so be you can get to your home and back before high water."

"That can be done easy."

I was so ungenerous as to say to myself that this Symonds would take of our store of provisions without intending to fulfill his promise, and chuckle to himself at having gotten the best of three boys; but when he went below with Thad and save for the captain's insistence would have selected what seemed only a beggarly supply, I changed my opinion.

Thad forced him to take a generous store, and he hurried away as if eager to be with us again, which behavior heartened me till I

believed we would of a verity be lying off Grand Battery again by the time another day had dawned.

While we were holding this conversation with Symonds the prisoners had had good chance to talk with each other, yet I do not fancy such opportunity caused them to feel any better in mind.

They knew from what the visitors said that no hope remained the Britishers would capture the schooner while she was yet ashore, and must have begun to realize there was good show of soon being forced to answer to the American forces for their misdoings.

"We must keep as sharp a watch as ever," Thad said, speaking in a low tone lest he be overheard by the villains; "but I reckon they won't try to do anything very desperate now it is known we are so far from those who might have aided them."

CHAPTER XI.

MAROONING MUTINEERS.

It was disheartening to think that we might have carried to the city early information regarding the advance of the British forces if we had set sail instantly after learning that which the commandant of Fort Defiance had to tell.

It is true there was no wind at the time; but the storm which came on after we had been overpowered would have carried the little schooner up the bay like a bird.

However, as I said to myself then while we were awaiting Symonds' return, it would do little good to grow sad over a mistake which could not be set right, and I tried to console myself with the thought that we might soon be on our way there, arriving in season to be of assistance in the battle which must of a necessity come.

Thad economized time by serving out sup-

per, and on this occasion Clark was the last to come forward for his rations.

"I'd like to talk a little, captain," he said before taking up the food Sam set in front of him.

"About what?"

"Myself, an' it has been on my mind since before we learned what kind of a trick had been played upon us, so don't think it's only because of what the fisherman said."

"Getting sick of playing the traitor?"

"I was that even before I begun, and have been waiting for a good chance to say I'm mighty sorry at being found in such company."

"Would you have said the same if we hadn't turned the tables on your crowd?"

"I don't suppose so, for I wouldn't have had the chance; but I was minded to give these fellows the slip whenever the opportunity came. I didn't go into the plan till all the others had been brought over, and I'd have been made a prisoner as you were, but for consenting. This ain't a case of cryin' baby just because I've been whipped, for if we'd carried the scheme through as it

was planned, I'd have slipped away from my mates at the first good show."

"What do you want to do?"

"Turn to like a man, instead of bein' driven to it by loaded muskets, and then, if it so be we get back to the city, take my punishment for turning renegade. I can't say I could walk to the gallows willingly; but I'd gladly go into jail for a long spell if it was possible to be put back where I was forty-eight hours ago."

"You want us to give over watching you—is that it?" Thad asked sharply.

"Not a bit of it; watch me as you do the others, but think while doing it that it ain't needed. If it so happens there's a show of proving I'm downright sorry, an' there may be if we're to run past the fleet, give me the chance—that's all I ask for."

Thad turned to Sam and me as if to ask what we thought of the matter, and I answered the question in his eyes before he could speak.

"I'm willing to trust him, as much so because of what he did in the night as for his words now."

Sam nodded his head in token that he agreed with me, and Thad turned to the repentant mutineer.

"I believe you, Clark, and to show that I do give you full liberty of the deck, but with the understanding that you aid us in keeping watch over the prisoners."

"I thank you, captain, an' you too," he added, looking at Sam and me. "There's yet a chance I may win my way back to what I was before fallin' in with Barnes, and that's an honest man; but except for the corporal and the cook, I don't think you've much to fear in the way of mischief—two of my mates are sick of this job as I am."

Thad did not ask who they were, but began to eat his supper, and I turned to look at the cook, who had swung half-around when Clark, leaving us, went forward once more as if to show he would not presume upon the privilege the captain had granted him.

It was in my mind that the cook wanted to speak with the repentant man, and, being willing he should in order that the soldier's honesty be tested, I feigned to look in another direction.

I could see from out the corner of my eye something of what was going on, but, not suspecting mischief, came very near to making the mistake of my life.

The cook had, as I have said, turned just as Clark passed him, and suddenly I saw the gleam of steel in his upraised hand.

As the thought came upon me that the villain was about to do murder because the man had been trying to atone for his misdeeds, I fired almost at random, but it was providentially permitted that the ball should speed as truly as if my aim had been careful.

The bullet struck the scoundrel on the arm that held the weapon, and he was spun around like a top.

Again I thought I had killed him; but this time I did not shudder at the possibility, for nothing save God's mercy and my shot had saved Clark's life.

Thad had seen some portion of the business, and when the cook fell he cried out to Barnes:

"Attend to that man, corporal, and if he isn't hurt seriously we'll trice him up in such

a fashion that he can't play any more tricks! Clark, bring that knife aft!"

Barnes was not minded to play the part of nurse even to his comrade, but Sam made a threatening gesture, and he obeyed with a mighty poor grace.

Clark would have returned when he laid the knife on the deck in front of the captain, but Thad bade him remain where he was.

"We'll trust you aft, and I promise to say to Colonel Tupper all I can in your favor if you do your best from this time out."

I had reloaded my musket, and the captain sent me forward to learn in what condition the cook was.

Although I had never seen many gunshot wounds, I knew at one glance that the man was not hurt seriously, for the bullet had passed through the fleshy part of his arm without cutting an artery, as could be told by the moderate flow of blood.

However, I considered that it would be brutal to fetter him in such way as Thad had suggested, and so reported.

"If we search to make certain he has no other weapons, I think he might be left on

deck—of course it won't do to trust him out of our sight."

It was decided the fellow should be allowed to remain amidships near the port rail, and orders were given that no one venture within speaking distance.

By the time the excitement caused by this event had subsided, Peleg Symonds rowed around the point again, and the muzzle of a gun which could be seen above the side of the boat told that he was prepared for serious business.

"Anybody been shootin'?" he asked as he came over the rail. "I allowed I heard a musket-shot not long ago."

Thad explained what had occurred, and Peleg went forward to where the wounded man lay.

The shirt-sleeve had been torn away, but as yet no bandage was put on, and the fisherman said in a matter-of-fact tone as he proceeded to dress the injury in a certain rude manner, but deftly:

"It don't amount to much else than a deep scratch, more's the pity. If you'd killed the traitor outright it would been a savin' of

rope, though he don't by no means deserve sich a easy death."

With Symonds, who in ability would count for any three of the party, and Clark, whom I believed we could trust implicitly, the force in possession of the Laughing Mary was so great that we no longer had any reason to fear what the mutineers might do, particularly while they remained in full view on the deck, and thus we were relieved in a measure from the strain of watching them so closely.

Peleg did not make light of the danger to which we would be exposed while trying to make our way past the British fleet; but appeared firm in the belief that it was possible to accomplish the task.

"If they slap a shot into the schooner at the proper place, she'll go down mighty quick," he said thoughtfully, "an' there's nothin' we can do to guard against it, so it's a case of takin' chances. 'Cordin' to my way of thinkin' the hottest part of the work will come from the small arms, for it'll be their interest to pick off the man at the tiller."

"I'll do that part of the work, and you can act as pilot without being exposed all the time," Thad said quickly, and the fisherman did not appear overly well pleased with the remark.

"If I can't do my share of the work there's still time enough for me to go home. I don't count on bein' much of a fighter when all hands are usin' powder an' ball, but I'd hate to think there was anything of the coward in me."

"It shall be as you say," Thad replied; "but I claim the right to do my full share."

"An' that's what I allow all three of you lads can do. If you were smart enough to get the best of seven, an' after they'd rigged you up with rope jackets, I'll answer for it there's pluck in the crowd that'll keep every one standin' mighty nigh straight while the Britishers are havin' their little joke."

"How long before the tide will be full?" I asked, thinking we had had enough of compliments.

"In less'n half an hour, an' if the captain says the word I reckon it won't do any harm to take in the slack of them hawsers. A

pound or two now will help along amazingly when the water lifts her a bit more."

Strong in numbers though we were, Thad did not think it safe to relax his vigilance entirely, and Sam was left aft on guard while we set about the task.

Peleg took it upon himself to see that Barnes did a full share of the work. He ranged himself alongside the corporal with an air that told how well he would enjoy spurring him up now and then, and the traitor understood it, for he worked as he never had before.

Tug and strain as we might, and all save Sam and the cook were at the windlass, we could not budge the schooner from her resting place, but the cables were now drawn so taut that there would be a constant strain upon her while the tide was rising.

"I reckon there's nothin' for it but to loaf awhile," Peleg said as he wiped the perspiration from his face with the sleeve of his shirt, "though it does seem too bad that this 'ere crowd what allowed the craft to run her nose into the sand shouldn't be made to buckle on a spell longer."

The soldiers, who had been doing but little work during the past four months, were limp as rags because of the unusually hard labor, and needed a rest badly; but I verily believe they would have continued the work had Thad ordered them to do so.

Clark had really done more than his share, and as he bent to the windlass-bars it seemed as if there was the strength of half a dozen men in his arms.

He was trying to atone in a manly fashion for the wrong he would not have done under other circumstances.

While we were forced to remain idle Peleg told us what he knew concerning the movements of the enemy, and I set it down here that all may see how accurate were his statements.

"Two frigates an' a couple of bomb ketches run into Gravesend Bay this mornin' 'long 'bout sunrise, towin' eighty or more flat-boats, an' nobody was there to say them nay. The small craft was rowed to the wharf loaded with soldiers, in ten squads, an' that's how I know so near the exact number what landed."

"Then you saw it all?" Thad asked in surprise.

"If I hadn't, I'd been out fishin' this day. Seein' the frigates gettin' under way was what made me keep my eyes open, an' I had sense enough to know what might happen if the Britishers found out I was spyin'. I had come up along the shore to sell last night's take of fish, an' was countin' on tackin' across from Denice's ferry. After catchin' sight of the movements I allowed the time had come when it would be wise to keep under cover, an' from that minute I didn't show myself to any great extent."

"How did you get back?"

"Sneaked down close in shore while the soldiers were landin', an' had it in my mind that there was a bare chance I might walk from the upper end of Jamacia Bay across to Brooklyn in time to save our folks from bein' surprised outright, though perhaps it's known to them long before this. Then I saw the spars of this craft, an' kinder run of the idee she might be hidin' from the fleet."

"If it is known in the city that the British have landed, we shall be taking all the risks

of passing the fleet for nothing," Sam suggested, and Thad said promptly:

"It won't be for nothing, since we shall be performing our duty, and even though we do not give the earliest information, there may be much work for the Laughing Mary in the way of carrying troops. It——"

Thad ceased speaking very suddenly as an odd sound was heard coming apparently from beneath the water, and at the same instant we felt a certain jar, as if the earth had been shaken by a heavy explosion.

Peleg leaped to his feet with a loud cry, and ran toward the windlass.

"Buckle to her, my hearties, an' if we can make her groan once more in the same way the trick will be done!"

Now I understood that the noise which we both heard and felt was caused by the schooner herself as she yielded to the strain of the hawsers, and I added my voice to that of the fisherman.

Sam would have joined us in the work which promised to be so near an end but that Thad reminded him of his duty, and he was forced to remain aft watching the

scoundrelly mutineers as they assisted in the labor which might result in their being delivered up to justice.

How we tugged and strained at the bars, knowing if the Laughing Mary was not afloat within the next thirty minutes she must remain on the sand another twelve hours at the least!

Then how we shouted—that is to say, how all save those who had run her ashore shouted—when she gradually yielded to the pull of the cables until, with a quick courtesy to the land, she slipped off the beach, swinging round to her anchors as if in delight at being free once more!

Then Thad, eager to be under sail, gave the word to weigh anchor, and one was taken in board that we might use it to trim ship, but before the second could be tripped Peleg said to the captain:

"You surely don't count on carryin' all that useless lumber with us, eh?"

"The men, do you mean? We can't help ourselves, so far as I see, and besides, they should be delivered over to their commanding officers."

"I reckon there won't be many tears shed if they never come back; but in case you hold to it that they must go, it will stand us in hand to see not a single villain of 'em is loose."

"I don't think there's much chance they can play any tricks while all hands are on the lookout."

"There's no tellin' what may be done," Peleg said gravely. "We're countin' on takin' mighty big risks, an' it won't do to run any more than is called for. 'Cordin' to my figgerin' we'll sneak up on the fleet, lettin' the Britishers think we're fishermen ready to trade, as long as they'll believe it, when we must make a bold dash providin' there is wind enough an' in our favor. Now one of these sneaks might do us a bad turn by yellin', or kickin' up a row."

"There is no place where they could be left," Thad replied thoughtfully.

"This 'ere island will hold 'em, I reckon, an' there's small chance of their gettin' off for quite a spell, unless they are mighty good at swimmin'. If they was ashore we'd have what you might call a clean craft,

which would count big in case we had any trouble."

Thad realized the force of this last argument, as did both Sam and I, but yet he felt it his duty to deliver the mutineers to the proper authorities.

"If the British have landed it is certain there'll be a battle soon—perhaps before we can get back to New York, and in that case our people couldn't spend much time over prisoners, even though they are traitors. I think the mutineers should be put ashore as Master Symonds suggests."

Sam was not wont to give his opinion unasked unless he believed there was urgent reason for so doing, therefore his words had more weight with Thad than anything I could have said.

After some discussion it was decided that all save Clark be put ashore, with a sufficient amount of provisions to last them at least two days.

Peleg insisted strongly that it would serve them right if they were marooned without so much as a loaf of bread, but this Thad would not allow after he learned from the

fisherman that the fellows might remain there a couple of weeks or more before having an opportunity to gain the mainland.

Even though all knew that death might be the penalty for what they had done, every one except the cook pleaded to be allowed to stay on board. The desolate island had for them more terrors than a jail, and before we were rid of them I began to think the punishment would not be slight.

Clark and Peleg rowed the mutineers ashore, and I felt a wonderful sense of relief when I saw these two returning, for now we no longer had enemies as messmates.

The night had come by the time we were ready to make sail, and no further delay was made before setting out on the voyage which promised death for all hands.

The canvas was set; Peleg took the helm, and Clark busied himself with getting something hot for a second supper, which we would need as soon as it could be made ready.

The wind was by no means as strong as we could have wished; but the fisherman declared we would have plenty before arriving

at the Narrows, and I hoped most devoutly he might prove a true prophet.

In less than an hour the clouds began to gather, and our hopes arose in a wonderful degree.

"The breeze is close at hand," Peleg said gleefully, "an' by the time we're well into the Narrows the schooner will be boomin' along at a ten-knot gait. I allow we shall be close aboard of 'em before they know we're anywhere near, an' the Britisher what can aim a gun true on this night is a better man than I have ever allowed could be found wearin' a red coat."

"They won't have to aim very close to strike us if you run as near as may be necessary," Sam said grimly. "A couple of balls from those big guns would play mischief with the Laughing Mary."

I won't confess that I was really afraid because of the danger we must face, but certain it is I would have felt more comfortable in mind if my companions had not speculated at such length upon the possibilities.

There was no good reason why they should argue as to whether we were most

likely to be sunk by cannon balls or by coming in collision with a vessel of the fleet; neither did I care to hear just then that under the most fortunate circumstances we would be exposed to the Britishers' fire not less than twenty minutes.

But my wishes in the matter were not consulted, and I was forced to listen to such talk for an hour or more, after which my companions fell silent as if their own speculations had alarmed them.

We were not yet within sight of the lights of the fleet when Clark came aft to say he had the fourth meal ready, and Sam and Peleg went forward for their share while Thad and I looked after the schooner.

There was little to be done save keep the sails full, for the wind was free, and we talked of what might have been accomplished had the mutineers not made us prisoners, until my thoughts were taken from our own danger as I trembled for the safety of those who served the cause on Brooklyn Heights.

We had heard it said that the American army was composed of no more than eighteen

thousand men, and only half that number were on the Heights.

According to what Peleg had told us, twice as many Britishers must have landed in Gravesend Bay, and much as we hated the redcoats, there was no question but that they were well-trained soldiers with able officers.

"The danger we must encounter while passing the fleet is not greater than that to which General Putnam's troops are exposed," Thad said as if he believed I needed heartening, and he might have continued in the same strain a long while but for the fact that Peleg and Sam returned to take our places while we partook of the meal prepared by Clark.

In the galley the conversation was more cheerful, for we spoke of our success in floating the Laughing Mary, and I took good care the subject should not be changed until our hunger had been fully satisfied.

As we stepped out on deck again Peleg, who had taken up his station forward that he might the better con the ship, said in a half-whisper:

"Yonder are the lights of the fleet. Please God the squall breaks before we are sighted."

Straining my eyes to peer into the darkness, which seemed doubly black after coming from the lighted galley, I was soon able to distinguish the tiny specks toward which he pointed, and then I stepped back to blow out the candle in the cook's quarters.

CHAPTER XII.

PAST THE FLEET.

I HEARD Peleg say to Thad that the fleet was not more than two miles away, and since the Laughing Mary was swarming on at a rate that a frigate might have been proud of, with everything forward in a smother, we would be among our enemies soon, and, as I thought with thankfulness, it could not be very long until we were in safety, or at the bottom of the sea.

Before leaving our anchorage the schooner had been trimmed to a nicety, and on the course we were then running it was possible to get every pound's weight there was in the wind.

Many times in the past while we were sailing around the upper bay I believed the schooner had shown all the speed of which she was capable, but her best previous efforts

were slow as compared with what she was now doing.

The wind sent forth spiteful gusts at short intervals as if bent on knocking the spars out of the little craft, but she seemed rather to enjoy such rough treatment. Reeling under the weight of the canvas until the starboard rail was awash, she dashed through the surface of the waves rather than over them, throwing showers of spray masthead high, but forging ahead all the while as if realizing fully that our safety depended upon her heels.

"The squall will break before we're clear of the fleet, an' what the schooner's doin' now is enough to make a man believe she's alive," Peleg said in a half-whisper, and although such statement does not sound really true, it is a fact that I almost forgot the danger which menaced as I watched the Laughing Mary swarming along with the speed of a racehorse.

While everything held there was no fear the Britishers had any craft that could overtake us, but should one rope prove defective our undoing would be certain.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been little less than madness to carry such a press of canvas as we were now showing; but it was a case of risking everything, including our own lives, and we would as soon have thought of surrendering before it became necessary as to propose that sail be shortened.

Even as I stood gazing aloft at the straining cloths a huge, black object loomed up alongside, and my heart leaped into my throat like to suffocate me, for I knew we were in the very midst of our enemies.

Peleg, having gone aft some time previous, was now standing firm as a statue gripping the tiller, a fair mark for the enemy, and beside him I could perceive the figures of Thad and Sam.

That I should have suddenly forgotten my fears seems strange even at this day, but it is a fact that I seemed to lose all sense of danger instantly it was nigh at hand.

As we swept past the huge lump of blackness which I knew to be one of the frigates, something like a cry of alarm was heard, but the schooner was half a cable's length away

before the sudden leaping up of lights told that the enemy was alive to what we would do.

Then came a vivid flash, followed by a report which the wind smothered and carried down to leeward.

There was in my mind a dim idea that a shot had been sent after us, but I no longer gave heed to what lay in our wake.

We were heading on for another dark mass as if we would run it down, but when it seemed that the Laughing Mary was close aboard the warship, she sheered suddenly under Peleg's skillful touch, and we were gliding with the swiftness of the wind away from a second danger.

It could not be, however, that we should pass all the ships as we had the first two.

The report of the gun, which in my excitement I had hardly heard, was the signal for the fleet to be on the alert, and by the time the second vessel had been left astern it was as if the Narrows had become a playground for lightning.

All around could be seen spoutings of flame as the huge guns were discharged full at the

schooner, and within such a range that she must have gone down like a lump of lead had but one of the iron missiles struck her fairly, while the very air shook with the thunder of the reports.

That we could run through that sheet of fire and shot unharmed seemed absolutely impossible, and without thought of fear, because of the excitement which had seized upon me like a fever, I waited to hear and feel the crashing of the ball which would destroy us.

"Lie down!" I heard Peleg shout; but I heeded not the command.

To have moved so much as an inch from where I stood spellbound by the spectacle would have been impossible—I was like unto one in a trance, and yet remained bewildered when the danger had passed.

The British fleet was in our wake, and as the Laughing Mary dashed on up the bay, exultant in her escape, I breathed once more.

How long we had been exposed to the fire of the enemy I cannot say, nor are my companions willing to make any guess, save so far as may be done by estimating the speed

of the schooner and the length of roadstead occupied by the fleet.

Of our own knowledge we knew nothing, for the fever which was upon us drowned every sensation except that as of flying through the air.

Had our peril been one whit less we should have burst into cheers of triumph when we were so far up the bay that there was no fear a shot would hit us, but as it was, no one spoke.

Sam came forward and seized me by the hand, gripping it in silence till the pain of the pressure brought me out from the whirl into which I had been plunged; but not until some time had passed was it possible for me to speak.

"While passing the ships at close quarters we were too low in the water for their shots to strike us, and once the schooner had forged ahead she was swallowed up by the gloom!" he said as if thinking it necessary to explain why we had come unharmed out of the iron shower.

"I can hardly believe we have really done it," I managed to say after some difficulty,

and then both of us were roused into activity by Thad's voice, which rang out sharp and distinct.

"Stand by the fore halliards! Lower away smartly there, lads, smartly, or we may have taken all the chances of the Britishers' guns for naught!"

Sam and I sprang to obey the order, Clark bounding out of the galley to aid in the work, and when, after a hard battle with the rebellious canvas, it was snugged down to the boom in such fashion that it could do no harm, clumsily though it was stowed, we understood why the order to shorten sail had been given.

The squall which threatened when we approached the enemy had held off till we were past the danger point, but now it was like to burst upon us, and if we would save the gallant little vessel which had borne us so bravely, the pressure on the spars must be reduced.

Peleg was like unto three men at this moment.

Giving up the tiller to Thad, he joined us when we would put a reef in the mainsail,

and but for his efforts we might have been defeated even in the hour of victory.

Every man's strength was needed then, and Clark tried to outdo the fisherman, green hand at such work though he was, thereby proving his right to be pardoned for the mischief he had really been forced into.

Bravely as the Laughing Mary had carried us past the British guns, so did she now bear us on against the furious blasts of wind which threatened to deprive her of the spars, and the short-lived tempest was yet at its height when we dropped anchor under the guns of Grand Battery, our perilous voyage at an end.

It was not yet midnight; there might still be time to give valuable information, and Thad determined to go on shore at once, even though it seemed little less than folly to put off in Peleg's dory, which had been towing astern during the exciting passage.

"We can land at White Hall Slip, and must make a try for it," Thad said instantly the anchor was on the ground. "Sam, you shall remain in charge of the schooner, while 'Liphalet and I go to headquarters."

Our comrade made no remonstrance to this plan, although I knew he must be eager as I to be present when the story of what had been encountered was told, and we set out, fighting every inch of the way to the shore, arriving there finally, drenched to the skin.

The sentinel at headquarters would have refused to take in our request for an interview with Colonel Tupper but that Thad insisted so bravely it should be done, and as soon as might be afterward we were standing before our commanding officer, who gazed at us sternly.

"Your orders were to go to Governor's Island, and return at once," he said as Thad and I saluted in the best military fashion.

For reply to this remark, which was an accusation, Thad handed him Colonel Prescott's orders that we proceed to Fort Defiance.

"I am glad to know the delay was not caused by your own carelessness or neglect of duty," he said in a more friendly tone after reading the paper.

Then Thad, not attempting any preamble, repeated all which had happened much as

though reading the words from a logbook, and before the recital was finished Colonel Tupper motioned us to be seated.

"You have done well," he said when my comrade was at an end of the story. "The mutineers should have been brought back for punishment, but in view of all the circumstances I am inclined to the belief that you acted wisely. As to the man Clark, who has rendered good assistance, we will say nothing. I am satisfied to leave him in your charge."

The colonel questioned us closely regarding what Peleg had told concerning the movements of the enemy, and although the landing at Gravesend Bay was already known, I understood that the information we brought was of no slight value.

We remained at headquarters two hours before being dismissed, and then our orders were to be ready for getting under way at a moment's notice.

"We are likely to see warm work within the next twenty-four hours, and you need be prepared for any command. If it is possible, keep the fisherman with you. Money is

not plentiful, but he shall be paid in accordance with the service he renders."

The storm had cleared away when we came out of headquarters, and the stars were twinkling with a friendly glow at the yet angry waters.

Save for the fact that our comrade would be eager to learn the result of the interview, there was no reason why we should return to the schooner at once, and both of us were so excited by the events of the night that there was no pleasure in the thought of shutting ourselves up in the cabin of the Laughing Mary.

"If there is much work on hand we may not have an opportunity to walk through the city again for many days," Thad said to me as we involuntarily halted on gaining the open air. "What say you to strolling up Broadway?"

"I would like of all things to speak with my mother."

"We will stop there five minutes, and allow ourselves half an hour for the entire outing."

Although we should, perhaps, have re-

turned to the schooner at once because of Sam, I have never regretted the time we stole from slumber on that night.

I had heard that the streets of the city were barricaded in expectation the Britishers would make a landing on the island, but we had been kept so close aboard the Laughing Mary from the hour of taking command as to have seen nothing of what had been done.

On this night we had a better idea of what our independence might cost, as we viewed the preparations made by the citizens and soldiery.

Across Broadway near Wall Street was a beastwork of logs, rocks, and barrels filled with sand, behind which stood a squad of soldiers who demanded an explanation of why we were on the street at that hour.

It was necessary we should answer the questions, and at mention of the schooner to which we belonged the sergeant on duty became very friendly, so much so that I could not but believe we were well thought of by those of the army.

On Beekman Street another barricade was found, and we were again forced to make

explanations of why we were abroad, but at this point it was John Sinclair, Sam's cousin, who halted us.

Knowing me, he was very courteous, and explained that at Veseys, Barkly, Murrays, and Warrens Streets like barricades were erected and manned. He even extended his hospitality so far as to go with us to the Common, and point out there the fortifications which had been hurriedly set up for the better protection of the town.

It seemed as if we were in the midst of a city where war was already being waged, and it needed but the rattle of musketry and cries of the wounded to make the illusion perfect.

Because of John Sinclair's kindness we remained abroad much longer than had been agreed upon, and the result was that I had but scant time in which to greet my mother.

She, dear soul, knew nothing of our having been delayed in the lower bay, but fancied the Laughing Mary remained at her anchorage all this time while we had been very near death, and I did not undeceive her.

She cautioned Thad and I against being

reckless, as if believing we could come or go as we pleased, and cried out on discovering our garments were yet wet, insisting that we put on other clothes before returning to the vessel.

It was a saving of time to do as she demanded, and while we were shifting from damp to dry garments of mine, the dear woman set out on the kitchen table the best of all her stores.

To have refused to partake of the unseasonable repast would have been to cause her pain, and both feigned hunger we had not, thereby affording her the last pleasure it has been in my power to confer since that night.

If God in his great goodness permits me to see her once more in this world, I will speak hearty words of repentance for every sad thought I have ever caused her, although it is only since I am not permitted to see the dear face that I have realized how far short of what a son might be to a mother I have fallen.

It was near daylight when we pulled off to the Laughing Mary, and Clark was standing

watch, Peleg and Sam having turned in an hour after we went ashore.

My mind was so filled with thoughts of mother, whom I might never see again, and of the preparations for war as shown in the city, that for the moment I forgot how eager this man must be to hear what Colonel Tupper had decided should be done in his case, and would have gone below without other word than that of friendly greeting, but he stopped me at the companionway as Thad descended the stairs.

"Am I to be sent on shore as a prisoner, or will the colonel allow me to perform my share of the work that is to be done so soon?" he asked in a tremulous voice. "I am ready to stand up like a man and take my punishment; but it will be hard if I do not have a chance to redeem myself when every arm that can be raised for the cause is needed."

I soon gave the anxious man the pleasing information that, so far as he was concerned, it might be as if the schooner had never been seized, and then went below hurriedly, for the tears which came from his eyes gave me an uncomfortable sensation in the throat.

Thad and I had little sleep on this night.

It was not yet daylight when orders came for us to pull around to Peck's Slip, and there take on board troops to be carried to the Brooklyn shore.

And with such work as this were we kept busy until far into the night, meanwhile expecting each instant to hear the booming of cannon which would tell us that the battle had begun; but it was as if the enemy had no thought of making an attack.

Another day dawned and closed, and we had no more important task than playing the part of ferrymen.

For myself I would have been better satisfied to serve in the ranks, but a soldier may not act as seems to him best, and we tried to do our whole duty in this humble capacity.

As yet the British had made no sign they were bent on mischief, and I began to doubt if Peleg had really seen as many men set ashore at Gravesend as he stated.

"Never doubt but they'll soon let us know where they are," he said when I suggested on this second evening that a mistake had been made. "After the fight at Charlestown,

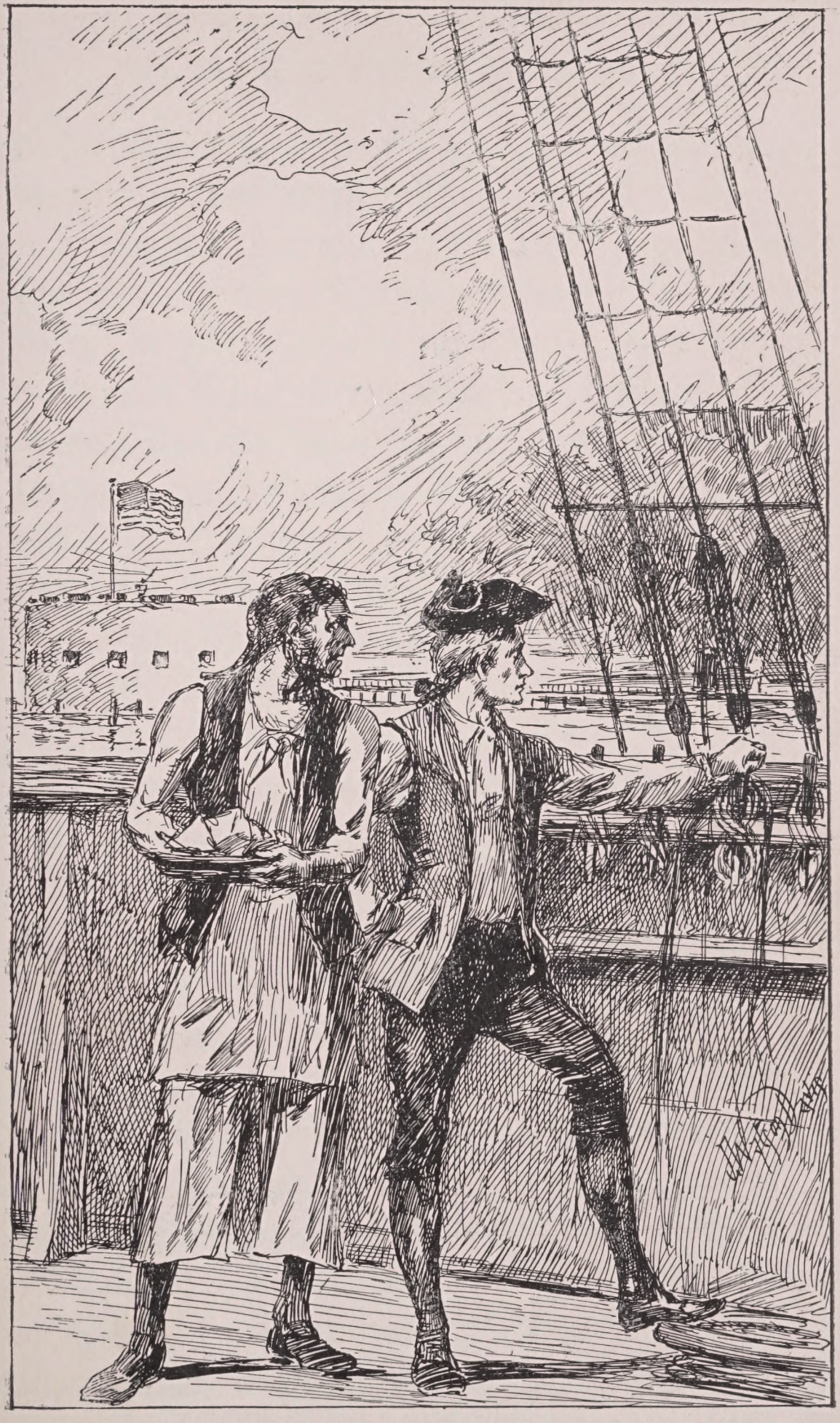
Lord Howe won't move in a hurry; but when he does strike a blow I'm fearin' our friends will feel it. I've agreed to stay on board the Laughing Mary till the scrimmage is over, an' shall hold to my word; but by so doin' I'm losin' the chance of bein' where men are most needed."

With an army twice as large as ours, and a fleet which could soon lay the city in ashes despite all our poor show of defense, I failed to understand why the Britishers delayed the blow, and in my folly began to fancy they were afraid.

I went on deck, leaving Thad, Sam and Peleg discussing the question of where the battle would be fought, for it was my watch, even though we were at anchor off Grand Battery, and lying much nearer the shore than was usual lest an attempt be made at cutting us out.

Clark, who now acted as cook, was in the galley, and I went forward to speak with him.

It was not yet dark, and one could see plainly the faces of the loungers ashore who were gazing down the harbor as if expecting



"DON'T MOVE, BUT LOOK ON SHORE WHERE STANDS THAT FELLOW WITH THE SCARLET SHIRT."

Laughing Mary, p. 241.

each instant to see the whole British fleet sail up to open fire on the city.

I stopped in front of the cook's quarters just as Clark came out of the door with something in his hands which he evidently intended to throw overboard, and as he turned toward the rail I saw his face pale suddenly, at the same instant that a low exclamation of mingled surprise and fear burst from his lips.

"What is the matter?" I cried, and was on the point of going toward him when he said sharply, but in a low tone:

"Don't move! Do not show surprise; but look on shore where stands that fellow with the scarlet shirt."

But for the warning I should have shouted for Thad to come on deck as I gazed in the direction indicated, and saw the face of Corporal Barnes!

Although he was not dressed in uniform, and in general appearance differed greatly from the soldier I had known to my sorrow, there could be no question as to his identity.

"Do not look in that direction long enough to allow the villain to suspect we have recognized him," I whispered, forcing myself to

gaze up and down the water front carelessly. "Thad must see him, otherwise he will insist that you and I are mistaken, for it does not seem possible the fellow could have followed us so quickly."

"No one would persuade me I had been mistaken in the face," Clark replied emphatically as he returned to the galley. "I have too good reason for remembering it."

"Keep your eye on him if it is possible to do so without his knowing he is being watched," I said, and then affected to stroll carelessly aft.

My comrades and Peleg were still earnestly engaged in their discussion when I leaned over the companion-hatch and said:

"Corporal Barnes stands on shore keeping a lookout on this schooner!"

Thad leaped to his feet as if he had been shot, and would have run up the stairs frantically, but that I checked him.

"The traitor will know he has been discovered if you come on deck in that fashion," I said, and instantly Thad calmed himself, walking out a moment later as if for no other purpose than to get the air.

It was too late for a second view of the scoundrel.

"He turned and went up the water front as you started aft," Clark said hurriedly when the captain emerged.

"Jump into the boat, 'Liphalet! We must make him prisoner since he has been bold enough to follow so soon."

It would have been folly for us to attempt anything of the kind at that hour, when night was approaching so rapidly. The only result a chase could have had would be to warn Barnes we knew of his presence in the city, and then all hope of capturing him had vanished.

This I began to explain to Thad in as few words as possible, and had no more than begun to speak when he, recognizing the force of the argument, interrupted me by saying:

"You are right, 'Liphalet. He could soon give us the slip among the throng, and in ten minutes it will be too dark to keep a man in view unless we might be close at his heels."

"There's bound to be something wrong 'bout this 'ere thing," Peleg interrupted as

he came from the cabin. "That mutineer of yours couldn't have got up this far since we left him on Barren Island, for it ain't once in a week a vessel runs near enough to be hailed. A man on that strip of sand would stay quite a spell, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin'."

"It's a mistake, of course," Sam added quite confidently, and then he returned to his seat on the locker as if satisfied with his own settlement of the matter.

CHAPTER XIII.

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS.

My comrades might as well have tried to convince me I was not on board the Laughing Mary as to insist I had been mistaken in believing I saw Barnes, and it was not my purpose to let the matter drop in that fashion.

Calling Clark into the cabin, I asked him to tell what he had seen, and to repeat that he could not have been in error regarding the corporal's face.

"When I first noticed him he stood a little back from the others, and I had the thought he was getting a general idea of the lay of the schooner. Even though it was possible to see only a portion of his face, I knew him at once. He kept edging nearer the water till he was in full view, and there's no mistake about its being him."

"Clark did not say to me whom he had

seen, but asked me to look at the fellow with the scarlet shirt," I added. "Instantly I recognized Barnes, and it is certain, Thad, that he is in New York at this moment."

My comrades could not fail to be convinced by this time, but Peleg continued to repeat that it would not have been possible for the mutineers to leave Barren Island, until I asked sharply:

"How can you say a vessel or a boat did not put in at the island within five minutes after we set them ashore? You insist that no craft comes that way oftener than once in two or three weeks, all of which may be true, and yet remain equally a fact that our prisoners found a chance to escape within a few hours after we left."

"You may be right," Peleg replied thoughtfully; "but allowin' it be true, how could they get up to the city? The Britishers are in the Narrows, an' you know by this time that they don't let people sail back an' forth at will."

This question staggered me an instant, although it did not shake my belief in the identity of Barnes, and I was about to sug-

gest he might have come across the country, when it was as if the whole matter had been spread out before my eyes.

"If, as I have believed since the hour he succeeded in getting possession of the schooner, he is a spy in the pay of the British, it would be little trouble for him to come through the Narrows."

"Now you've hit the truth!" Thad cried emphatically as he leaped to his feet. "He has proposed to come back to New York for the purpose of seizing this schooner, and by such means will not only be working in the interest of those who are paying him, but at the same time be gaining his own revenge, for it is not likely he looks upon us other than as enemies."

I believed, as indeed all did, that Thad had made a true guess, and it was by no means pleasant to thus know some blow would be aimed directly at us.

"It stands this crew in hand to keep their eyes open mighty wide," Peleg said after we had remained silent fully a minute contemplating all the possibilities, "for I count myself as one of you till I've been regularly

discharged. That scoundrel ain't alone in the city, but most likely has plenty to back him."

"I'm the man he'll strike for first," Clark said in a low tone as if almost ashamed to give words to his fears. "Neither he nor the cook will forgive me for having set you free when the storm was raging."

"I reckon he'll think most of cutting out the schooner, an' after that's been done he'll have good chance to 'tend to private grudges. Captain," and now Peleg spoke gravely, "it ain't for me, who's only what you might call a 'foremast hand, to say anything 'bout how the ship should be run; but I'm makin' bold enough to hint that while we're at anchor it'll be safer to have two on watch than one."

"You are right, Peleg. 'Liphalet and Clark shall take the first trick to-night, with you and Sam to relieve them. Colonel Tupper ought to know that Barnes is in town, and I am going over to headquarters. I can row ashore alone."

"Better let us set you off, an' then we'll be more certain of findin' my dory when we want her again."

Thad was not one to neglect any precaution, however useless it might seem at the time, and Sam and Peleg pulled him ashore a few moments later, leaving me at leisure to think over how we could best guard against a surprise.

The captain was not absent more than an hour, and on his return reported that the colonel had appeared considerably excited when told of Barnes' return.

"But for the fact that a battle is imminent he declares he would have the city searched from one end to the other," Thad said. "He wanted to send a squad of men on board to help us if a large force became necessary; but I begged off, telling him we were able to defend the schooner, and, what was better, knew there were no traitors among our number, which might not be the case if strangers were added to the crew."

During my watch on deck this night I did not remain below a single moment, and it can readily be understood that neither Clark nor I had any desire for sleep while on duty.

At midnight we were relieved by Peleg and Sam, and when morning came each

watch reported that nothing suspicious had been seen.

On this day and the next we were provided with plenty of work, and on the night of the 26th all hands had begun to fancy we were needlessly alarmed about Barnes.

Very likely he was yet in the city playing the part of spy, but because nothing had occurred during the forty-eight hours while such vigilant watch had been kept, we were so foolish as to believe no real danger threatened.

That the British had not made an attack seemed more odd than Barnes' inaction, and among very many of our troops the idea gained ground that there would be no battle in the vicinity of New York.

Clark and I had the last watch this night, and when I came on deck at twelve o'clock Sam reported that everything was quiet.

"The fact of Barnes not having shown himself since that evening either proves he saw he was discovered, or Lord Howe's plans have been so changed as to abandon the attack on Brooklyn Heights, and in any case the scoundrel will be more cautious," Sam

said in the tone of one who is convinced he has hit upon the truth of a matter. "Most likely he counted on being able to work some mischief while a battle was being fought."

Although I did not apprehend any immediate danger either to our friends or ourselves, there was no carelessness on my part or that of Clark.

We paced the deck regularly, taking good care to understand the cause of every unusual noise, but hearing nothing until an hour before dawn, when the sound of oars quickened our senses.

A boat in which were four men was pulled almost entirely around the Laughing Mary, and I hailed her.

Almost at the same instant I spoke the strangers steered sharply out into the stream and, owing to the darkness, it was impossible for us to say in which direction they went after that.

There may have been nothing to excite suspicion in this maneuver; the early visitors might have come from some one of the many vessels in the harbor, or were farmers bent

on taking their wares to the British fleet, and there were not a few who would sell supplies to the enemy because he was willing to pay a higher price than the citizens.

However, whether we had cause to be suspicious or not, there was nothing more to be learned regarding the boat, and when our watch finally came to an end I reported the fact to Sam as if I did not consider it of great importance.

Then, as was our right because of having stood a five-hour trick, Clark and I turned in.

Expecting Sam would call me when breakfast was ready, I did not get up immediately on awakening, but lay in the bunk idly, knowing full well if any service was needed I should be promptly informed of the fact.

After a certain time, however, it seemed as if I could remain there no longer, and I went on deck, discovering to my great surprise that although it was late in the day my comrades appeared to be thinking of anything rather than their duty.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "Is there nothing to be done to-day? Why are you fellows walking around with your heads in

the air as if something startling could be heard?"

"We do hear something," Thad replied gravely. "Listen!"

His manner, quite as much as his words, caused me to obey, and I heard a noise as of distant thunder.

Even now I did not realize what this heavy rumbling might mean, and said stupidly:

"I don't hear anything to disturb us. Why do we remain at anchor so long?"

"Because no orders to the contrary have been received. Can't you understand that the British are attacking our people? That you are listening to the noise of a battle?"

Now that the matter had been thus forced through my thick head I was in a fever of excitement.

The enemy had not been afraid to open an engagement, but simply waited until they were ready, and like a flash of light the thought came to my mind that but a short distance away our friends were engaged in deadly struggle against an overwhelming force, braving and meeting death that the cause might triumph.

"Are we to lie here idle while a battle is being fought?" I cried as if in frenzy. "If the British outnumber our friends two to one, why is not every man and boy called upon to do his full share of the work?"

"That is for our commanders to say. It is as much our duty to remain here at anchor ready for whatever orders come as to be on Long Island confronting the redcoats," Thad said gravely. "Could I have my choice we would be there this moment."

Even as he spoke I noted the fact that Peleg was not on deck, and asked concerning him.

"He was sent for shortly after you turned in, and I heard the messenger ask if he was acquainted with the roads on Long Island, therefore concluded his services were required as a guide."

Then Thad fell silent, as indeed we all did, for there was something positively painful in the enforced inactivity while we knew beyond a peradventure that our friends were struggling against overwhelming odds.

It is not possible for me to set down here of my own knowledge very much of what

we did during the long, wearisome hours of this day. There were very many times when it seemed as if I was no more than a pair of huge ears, so intent was every faculty in the act of listening.

Now and then one or the other of us would cry out as some man passed along the water front, asking if any news of the battle had been gained, and our questions were unheeded more often than answered—it was as if a panic of fear, perhaps I should say apprehension, had seized upon those who yet remained in the city.

It might have been two hours after noon when occurred that to which we have since looked back many times with pride.

A party of horsemen—eighteen in all, I think—came at full speed down the street, and Sam cried excitedly as he pointed toward them:

"Look! It is General Washington himself! Now, please God, we shall have work to do!"

Colonel Tupper rode with the party, and he it was who shouted for us to warp the schooner into White Hall Slip that the horsemen might embark.

The tide was at such height that the deck of the Laughing Mary stood nearly flush with the slip, and the officers leaped their horses aboard, one of the generals—I don't remember which, but am certain it was not the commander-in-chief—giving the word for us to cast off and make sail for the Brooklyn shore with the least possible delay.

We had a free wind, not strong, but sufficient to send the schooner onward faster than a ten-oared galley could have been rowed, and it can well be fancied that we in charge of the Laughing Mary, proud with the thought of conveying such passengers, exerted ourselves to the utmost that the voyage should be speedy.

Even now as I look back on that time it seems as if we had hardly left the slip when we arrived at the opposite shore, and as the horsemen landed Colonel Tupper gave orders that the schooner lay where she was then moored until word to the contrary was sent, unless, peradventure, the enemy should appear, in which case we were to take due measures to save the vessel from capture.

We spent the hours until perhaps nine

o'clock pacing to and fro on the deck, bewailing the fact that our part in this day's work was so insignificant, and were startled even though on the alert, when hailed by some one from the shore.

"Ahoy!" Thad replied, and we heard Peleg Symonds' voice as he said half to himself:

"It's a case of clear luck, my stumblin' upon the schooner without havin' a notion of where she laid!"

Now at last we would hear of what had been done, and I warrant you the fisherman had never received a more hearty welcome than we gave him as he came over the rail.

"We are beaten!" he exclaimed without waiting for our questions. "Not whipped straight out of our boots, but still have had a pretty stiff dose, and to-morrow it may be worse than to-day."

We were almost stunned by the news he brought.

Because of not having seen our friends retreating, we believed them to be victorious, or at least to have held their own with the Britishers, and it was as if Peleg's words had deprived us of the power of speech.

"I reckon I can give you about as good an idee of what has been done as Colonel Tupper himself could," the fisherman said as he threw himself on the deck like one exhausted. "I have been hither and yon since leaving the schooner, till it seems that I have traveled over every foot of ground on Long Island, an' haven't lost a single chance to ask questions. Here is the story of the battle, an' when it's finished Clark must set out my full day's rations, for, barrin' a little water now an' then, nothin' has passed my lips since I went ashore this mornin'."

"Come into the galley," Thad said, "and while supper is being made ready we can hear the story."

It can well be imagined that all hands of us did our best at making Peleg comfortable, and when he was ready to give an account of the day's work, I stationed myself just outside the galley to keep watch lest any evil-disposed person should approach from the shore; yet not so far from the speaker but that I could hear his story.

"Early this mornin', an' these words came from General Putnam himself when he was

explainin' to the commander-in-chief what had happened," Peleg began, "the British General Grant, with what they call the Highland regiments, came up the coast road to our outposts, where was commanding William Alexander, of New Jersey, whom some call Lord Stirling. General von Heister led the Hessians along the Bedford and Flatbush road toward General Sullivan's position, and a host of the redcoats under Howe himself, with Clinton, Percy, and Cornwallis in the train, made a night march on the Jamaica road to take our people in flank."

"What do you mean by 'flank?'" Sam asked, and Peleg replied carelessly:

"It is because I could not rightly make out myself that I remember the words so well. At all events, that is the way General Putnam put it, an' I allow it comes mighty nigh bein' straight. It seems, accordin' to all accounts, that there was a patrol of five men on the Jamaica road, sent to that point for the special purpose of watchin' out on the Britishers. But them five, not content with obeyin' orders, an' believin' they knew a little more'n the commandin' officers did,

left their posts to push forward on the road with the idee of discoverin' the redcoats sooner.

"They found 'em; but not until after some of Clinton's men had made them prisoners, an' that settled all chance of our friends bein' warned in time. Consequently General Sullivan had no sooner begun fightin' with the Hessians under Von Heister than Howe's troops tackled him in the rear. That settled his part of the battle.

"Then him as they call Lord Stirling caught it thick an' fast. He showed good pluck, so I've heard said, though he was in a trap where it didn't seem possible any of his troops could get out. But a good part of 'em did reach the Heights again, by breakin' ranks an' crossin' the marshes the best way they knew how, while the Scotchman, with some Maryland men, held the redcoats in check."

"Is that all you have to tell?" Thad asked as Peleg paused.

"It comes pretty nigh to bein' the whole of it. Lord Stirling has been captured, more than a thousand of our people are in the

Britishers' hands, an' four or five hundred have fought their last battle."

"Killed, do you mean?" Sam asked in horror.

"Yes, lad, killed an' wounded. It is said the redcoats have suffered, except so far as prisoners go, in about the same figgers. We still hold Brooklyn Heights, an' General Howe's men are in front of us ready for work to-morrow morning. I have always had an idee I would like to see a battle; but that is gone out of my head from this day. It don't sound very terrible as we set round here talkin', to say that this 'ere force came up on the other, an' forty or fifty were killed. To know what them few words mean a man needs to be on the ground—to see the brave fellows mowed down till great gaps are left in the line, an' hear the cries of them as are mangled or dyin'—to understand that all hands are tryin' to butcher each other.

"There don't seem to be much glory left in war after that. I allow them as are fightin' haven't the time to look at it, or else they come so nigh bein' wild with excitement as not to hear or see all that's terrible; but I

was there only to show others the way, an' please God I may never play such a part again."

Peleg covered his face with his hands as if to shut out the remembrance, and thus I had a better idea of the horrors he had seen, for the fisherman was not one who might be easily moved.

Each of us in turn asked some question, hoping there might be a bright side to his story, but we received no encouraging information.

That our forces were beaten there appeared to be no doubt in his mind, and one would have said, judging from Peleg's words and manner, that the end of the struggle for independence had come here on Brooklyn Heights, before our people had really had time to measure strength with the foe.

There came to me the question as to why our army did not retreat, for then I knew very little regarding military matters.

"If we stay here who shall say the Britishers will not capture us also?" I asked, and perhaps my voice trembled, for my heart was quaking with fear.

"If we stay here?" Thad exclaimed. "There can be no question about it. The orders were for us to remain, and here we shall stop whether the British come or not."

"The redcoats won't get over the Heights without a struggle, that I warrant you, lads!" Peleg cried excitedly. "We have had a drubbin' this day; but there's none among our friends who can be called cowards, an' all hands are bound to give a good account of themselves before the end comes. If things turn as now it seems they must, we on board the Laughing Mary will have plenty of work, considerin' as how there's such a stretch of water between the American troops an' New York."

Then it was as if we could no longer talk quietly regarding what had happened, or listen one to the other; but each put forth his own opinion until we realized our foolishness, when a silence like that of despair fell upon us.

Peleg forgot that he was hungry, and we gave no heed to the fact that he had not eaten the food set before him until an hour must have passed, and then Thad, as if sud-

denly aroused to a sense of duty, said sharply:

"If all our people were like us, the American army would have been whipped before the British advanced. We have been left in charge of a schooner with the idea our services may be needed, and now more than ever is it necessary each one should be on the alert, ready to succor our friends, or to inflict some injury upon those who would deprive us of our rights. We must be prepared to sail at a moment's notice, and there is work to be done instead of sitting here quaking with fear because the king's troops have gained one victory!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

THAD's brave words heartened us all, and indeed on that night we needed to be cheered, for the knowledge that the Britishers had gained a victory made it appear as if the cause was doomed.

It is true we knew before the battle began that our troops were outnumbered nearly two to one, and that they were unaccustomed to military duties, while the enemy's ranks were made up of well-seasoned, well-tried soldiers.

Yet because we wished it so we had believed all such odds would be overcome, and fighting as our friends were, not only for liberty, but for their homes and those dear to them, it had been in our minds that they must be victorious.

Now, as I have stated, the fact that the

American troops had been overcome—it cannot be said they were vanquished, since according to Peleg's story we still held the position assumed in the morning, and were keeping the redcoats at bay—plunged us into a state of greatest despondency, and we were ready to believe most serious misfortunes would be ours on the following day.

When, however, Thad reminded us on board the Laughing Mary of the fact that regardless of what had happened we had yet a duty to perform, it quickened us out of our gloom, and in a brief space of time each one, with the exception of Peleg, who had already done more than a day's work, was about some task for the better defense of the schooner, or on the alert for possible danger.

We believed General Washington and his staff would, if a retreat was made, look to us for conveyance to the other side, and, according to Sam's suggestion, we made a brave show of lights fore and aft, heeding not the fact that we were proclaiming our whereabouts to the enemy, but setting the signals boldly that there might be no difficulty in finding the Laughing Mary should need arise.

It was, perhaps, a little past midnight when we had completed all the preparations for defense which could be devised, and then came those hours which pass most painfully at such times—the hours when one is forced to remain inactive, although knowing there is much to do were he in the proper place.

Thad, mindful of the fact that our services would be needed on the morrow more than now, insisted we make it a duty to get such rest as might be possible, and to this end divided the crew into two watches, each of which was to stand an hour's trick.

It was decided the captain and Sam should go first on duty, Thad having insisted upon doing his share because of the fact that Peleg could not rightfully be called upon after his day of excessive labor.

Clark and I went below, but there was no heaviness of slumber upon our eyelids. We had been so thoroughly awakened by the knowledge of the disasters that it seemed impossible we could close our eyes in sleep this night.

However, after a certain time the languor of weariness began to creep over me, and I

became dimly conscious of the fact that I would soon be overpowered by slumber, when a sharp cry from the deck and the heavy trampling of feet brought me out of the bunk in an instant.

Clark was staring wildly about him; but without having attempted to arise, and, shouting for him to follow, I ran up the companionway at full speed.

On coming into the open air it was for a moment difficult to make out what was being done.

I saw Thad and Sam standing by the starboard rail, and it seemed to me as if they were alone, for all was darkness beyond the glare of the lanterns.

At the same instant I gained the deck Peleg came from the galley where we had left him lying down, and, quicker-witted than I, appeared to realize at once the cause of the alarm.

I saw him seize a capstan bar which was standing against the water cask, and with that as a weapon rush toward my comrades.

Then it was I distinguished forms in the darkness, as if men were swarming up over

I HAD A BELAYING-PIN, AND WITH IT BEAT OFF A FELLOW WITH A KNIFE.

Laughing Mary, p. 269.

the side, and I ran forward at full speed, now beginning to have an inkling of what was going on.

Arriving at the rail by Thad's side I saw that a boat which seemed to be filled with men was alongside the schooner, and then came the thought that Corporal Barnes had led a party here to the Laughing Mary.

It would be impossible for me to set down of my own knowledge all which occurred during the next ten minutes, for I had but little idea of anything save the fact that I was straining every muscle to prevent the schooner from being boarded.

During this time the battle was waged silently, and later I came to understand that the enemy, whoever they might be, were not overanxious to make a noise lest our friends, being perhaps near by on the shore, should come to the rescue.

On our part we made no outcry simply because at that moment it did not seem as if an appeal for aid would be of any avail.

I had a belaying-pin, and with it beat off, I know not how, a fellow with a knife who was doing his utmost to run me through.

It had been a long battle, or seemed so to me, when two of our assailants gained the deck by dropping into the water and swimming forward, and as they made a dash aft over the bow I recognized Barnes.

Then it was I yelled, not in the hope of attracting assistance, but to warn my comrades that the traitor was one of the foe, and it was as if in a twinkling my cries changed the tide of battle.

"Hold on a minute longer, my hearties!" Thad shouted as he ran into the cabin, and was still urging us to renewed exertions when he reappeared.

Then I heard a report immediately behind me, followed by a cry of pain, and Thad shouted again:

"Get aft here, lads, and arm yourselves! It is not for us to fight with sticks at such a time as this!"

The enemy was pressing us hard.

Already had we retreated step by step from the moment the first two appeared over the bow until all the occupants of the boat were on deck, and it was high time indeed we had recourse to more deadly weapons.

Luckily the muskets were loaded, that having been a portion of our work when we prepared for defense, and as we broke and ran Thad stood ready to pass each a weapon, thrusting the arms into our hands so expeditiously that we were facing the renegades before they were within striking distance.

I waited, as did my companions, for the word "fire" to be given; but in a twinkling the decks were cleared, for, seeing how well we were now prepared, the scoundrels beat a hasty retreat by leaping over the rail into the water.

Their hope had most likely been to take us by surprise, believing not more than two would be above at that time in the night, when it might be an easy matter for a boat's crew to make their way on to the deck, and once having gained the hold unobserved, the Laughing Mary would be in their possession with hardly so much as a blow.

Peleg rushed to the rail as the fellows leaped over, and would have fired upon them while they were in the water, but that Thad struck up his weapon as he cried:

"That is not the way we've been taught to

fight, Symonds. They have retreated, and are defenseless. It would be little less than murder to shoot them now."

"It is no more than they'd do to us. How long do you reckon that scoundrel Barnes would stand idle if you were swimmin' out yonder, an' he here with a musket in his hands?"

"There are many things he is willing to do which would put us to shame if we took pattern by him. It is enough that they have retreated."

Peleg was far from being satisfied with this decision, and I could not but sympathize with him in his grumbling, for it seemed a waste of opportunity to allow those who would have worked us so much harm to swim off at their leisure.

"I reckon we are not obliged to carry their boat out to them," Sam said in a tone which told that he also disapproved of the captain's command, and at the same moment he leaped into the craft which, having been moored to the fore-rigging, was close alongside.

The boat was no mean prize for us, as we soon learned.

From out of her Sam threw on to the deck three uniforms, a goodly store of provisions in the shape of smoked fish, hams and bacon, four muskets, a keg of powder and a quantity of bullets.

"Well, that beats me!" Peleg said as he stood with us surveying the spoils. "Why in the name of all that's good did those scoundrels fight so long with clubs, when they might have ended the battle in their favor by a dozen of these 'ere balls?"

There was indeed good reason for surprise, and we could make no reasonable explanation as to why they refrained from using arms, until we were hailed from the shore by one who spoke impatiently, as if wearied with trying to attract our attention.

"Ahoy on the vessel!" the voice cried. "Answer, or we'll open fire!"

"Ahoy!" Thad shouted.

"What vessel is that?"

"The Continental schooner Laughing Mary."

"What has been going on out there?" said the voice on shore.

"A boat's crew attempted to board us, and

we have just beaten them off. Did you hail before?"

"Yes; a dozen times. Do you know who attacked you? Was it a party of British soldiers or sailors?"

"The leader is a deserter from the American army by the name of Barnes, and I think his following were Tories from New York. There may have been a soldier or two among them, for we found four uniforms in the boat they left behind."

"Which way did they go?"

"Overboard, and must have landed close around somewhere."

We heard the command given for the guard to turn out, and soon a hum of voices here and there told that soldiers were searching along the shore for those who had attacked us.

Now we understood why Barnes and his party did not use their muskets.

They doubtless knew that some of our forces were encamped close by on the shore, and understood that the discharge of fire-arms would betray their purpose.

We hoisted the boat inboard, determined

the scoundrels should not regain possession of it, and then gave ourselves up to listening for those sounds which would betoken that our assailants had been captured.

In this we were not to be gratified, for the noise on shore soon died away, and all was silent again until it was difficult to persuade oneself that armed men were encamped close at hand.

When we had waited half an hour or more, hearing nothing, and Peleg was on the point of betaking himself again to his hard bed in the galley, we were hailed from the shore, this time by a voice which we recognized as Colonel Tupper's.

"Send a boat in for me," was the order given after Thad had replied to the cry, and from that moment until twenty-four hours had elapsed we had no idle time on our hands.

Colonel Tupper had come with orders for us to return to New York to bring over reinforcements, which work we began before daylight and continued until night.

General Howe's forces had made no attempt to storm Brooklyn Heights again, which

showed, to my satisfaction at least, that their victory on the day before was not counted by them as complete as it had seemed to us, otherwise they would have pressed their advantage.

It was sunset on this twenty-eighth of August in the first year of our independence —if indeed we can call it our independence when we are flying hither and yon before the British soldiery. I say, it was sunset on this day when we of the Laughing Mary ceased our work as ferrymen, and once more lay at anchor hard by the Brooklyn shore at a short distance from the ferry-way.

Peleg, who appeared not to need rest, begged of Thad permission to make a short cruise on shore in search of news, for mind you, we had been ferrying men across from New York, seeing no one who could tell us of what was being done at the Heights, although we knew full well an engagement had not taken place.

The fisherman remained absent no more than two hours, and when he returned was but little wiser than before.

"Our people don't seem overly well pleased

at seein' strangers, even though they might be friends," Peleg said gravely when questioned as to the result of his mission. "I reckoned it wouldn't be much of a job to tramp out to the front; but bless you, at every hundred yards or so some popinjay of an officer would jump out an' ask for the countersign. I was willin' enough to tell 'em who I was, an' why I'd come; but that didn't seem to make any difference. The upshot of the whole thing is that I haven't been very far from the ferry in all this time, an' it's precious little news I've got."

"Why didn't the British attack our people?" Thad asked impatiently.

"That's what I can't say, an' I ain't so certain General Washington himself knows. The redcoats are layin' in front of the Heights, while we've been pourin' in men till it's said there are nigh to ten thousand Americans inside the fortifications."

"Will there be a battle in the morning?" I asked.

"That is what everybody seems to believe, an' for my part I don't see what's to prevent."

More than this we could not learn, closely though we questioned the fisherman, and again we made preparations for guarding the schooner during the night.

Now, however, the camp fires of our people could be seen close at hand, and we had little fear of another attack from Barnes and his followers, even though they had escaped, which last did not seem probable.

I believed, as did my companions, that the scoundrels had been captured somewhere along the shore when they landed; but this we had no means of ascertaining.

Two of us were constantly on deck during the night without seeing anything to cause alarm.

Until noon of the next day, which would be the 29th, the two armies remained facing each other, neither disposed to strike the first blow.

Our work began shortly after twelve o'clock, when we carried Colonel Trumble to New York, and understood from what he said that some important movement was about to begin.

That which follows may sound tame and

uninteresting should any one read this record who did not take part in the retreat from Long Island; but to us who were there it was indeed most exciting, for by sunset even we in command of the Laughing Mary understood that General Washington's purpose was to transfer all his troops from one shore to the other secretly.

Never before have I seen such a fleet of boats as gathered near the ferry-way from two hours after we landed Colonel Trumble in New York, until sunset.

I believe of a verity that every craft which could be kept afloat, from a punt to an eight-oared galley, was collected from the water front of the city as far up as King's Bridge, and then, troop after troop, our men came silently down, taking their places in the boat nearest at hand, and pulling off from shore instantly she had a load.

The Laughing Mary was of but little service that night because of the absence of wind; but Peleg's dory, manned by himself and Clark, and the boat which Barnes' party had abandoned, pulled by Sam and myself with such assistance from our passengers as

we could get, plied back and forth with the hundreds of other craft until of all that vast army none remained on Long Island at sunrise save the six regiments which held the redoubts under General Mifflin's command.

Wearied almost to exhaustion, my comrades and myself clambered over the rail of the schooner when the day had fully dawned, and tired and hungry though we were, there was but one thought in our minds: How were the brave men who had been left behind to be brought away in safety, for but little time could elapse now before the Britishers must understand what had been done during the hours of darkness?

"They have sacrificed themselves to save the main army," Thad said in a voice choking with emotion, and it was as if the words had but just been spoken when Peleg cried excitedly:

"If that don't beat all creation!"

He stood staring toward the harbor, and we gathered around him asking an explanation, for we saw nothing which should have caused surprise until he said:

"Can't you see that fog bank rolling up?

Don't you know what it means to our friends in the redoubt? In less than ten minutes we shall be in a smother here that will puzzle Admiral Howe to see through, an' Mifflin's men can cross as safely as if they were on the other side this blessed minute!"

It did not seem possible Peleg had spoken truly, and yet as we gazed the gray bank came nearer and nearer until it crept down upon the Laughing Mary, hiding from us who stood aft, first the bowsprit, then the galley, and still onward until we were in the midst of a wool-like vapor which appeared as if sent by God himself.

Up to this moment we of the Laughing Mary had done no more than hundreds and hundreds of others who rowed to and fro from one shore to the other; but now we were able, as I hoped, to be of material assistance.

Understanding that all the movements must be made quietly, and that it would be difficult for our friends to determine the location of any craft save those drawn up on the shore, Peleg forgot weariness of body and leaped into the dory to push off, as he said hurriedly:

"I'll pull in an' be ready when the first of the troops that have been left behind appear on the shore, and meanwhile do you lads work the schooner as near the ferry-way as may be safe. This smother will confuse the landsmen until all are bewildered, unless some one is at hand to show them the way out."

While we were thus engaged there came from the dense vapor low, cautious hails, which we knew to be from the opposite shore, and Clark was stationed at the rail to answer these and thus lead the advancing boats in the right direction.

Not more than half the day had passed before it was said the last man of the American army had come down from the Heights, and then it was that General Washington with his staff, all looking as if ready to drop from fatigue, rode to the landing, and we of the Laughing Mary had the honor of ferrying the party across.

It was a long passage, and but for Peleg I fear we might have gone sadly out of our way, which would have been a misfortune while we had such passengers on board.

I had hoped to hear the commander-in-chief say something which might give us an inkling of how desperate he believed the situation to be; but my duty was forward as a lookout while we almost felt our way across, and I did not so much as see him after he came on board, until he landed at Ten Eyck's wharf.

We who were as tired as lads well could be understood why there was no tarrying on the part of the commander and his staff when it was possible for them to go on shore, and therefore it was that we took it as all the more kindly when Colonel Tupper lingered to say, as he placed his hand on Thad's shoulder, but looked around at us all as if we should know he was speaking to every one:

"You have done good work, lads—work such as men need not be ashamed of, and although these days seem dark and without promise, the hour will yet come when there shall be more of brightness for all of us who love the cause, and then your share in this task so well performed will not be forgotten."

Saying this he followed his fellow-officers, and as we three comrades stood looking into each others' faces, proud of what had been said to us, I saw Clark moving slowly, I almost fancied sadly, forward toward the galley.

Thad also noted his action, and calling him back to us said heartily:

"Those words spoken by Colonel Tupper were meant as much for you and Peleg as for us."

"For Peleg, yes; but for me who once turned traitor they could not be meant."

"All that is as if it never had been," Thad replied quickly, and Sam and I held out our hands to show we were of the same mind, when Peleg added:

"You are the mildest-mannered traitor I ever ran across, Clark, an' if it so be there had been a hundred more of the same kind, who could do such work, the American troops would have got across the river in better time. Take my advice, man, an' from this day out cease callin' yourself a traitor, for that which you did when the villain Barnes had the upper hand has been atoned

for, accordin' to my way of thinkin'. Barrin' Colonel Tupper, an' we of this 'ere schooner, nobody is any the wiser for what happened 'twixt Red Hook an' Barren Island, an' I'll venture to promise in the names of us all that it'll never be told as against you."

CHAPTER XV.

MYSTERIOUS ORDERS.

DURING the two days following the retreat of our army from Long Island, we of the Laughing Mary had but little public work to do, and perhaps it was well that the members of the "fleet" were allowed a breathing spell, for Colonel Tupper had never a man under his command who was not well-nigh exhausted on the morning all the craft anchored or moored near Grand Battery.

Although we who called ourselves members of the navy had had no fighting to do, neither were we required to aid in the task of throwing up breastworks when Brooklyn Heights was put into shape to receive the redcoats properly, yet every man and boy of us had worked to his utmost from the hour the battle began until all our troops were safe once more on the New York shore.

I for one would not have been surprised at anything Lord Howe might have done on that morning after discovering we had given him the slip.

As a matter of fact I fully expected the entire fleet would sail up and open fire on the city, as did my comrades, and we were astonished when the hours went by and he remained inactive.

"It will come before we are many days older," Thad said in the tone of one who has fully settled the question in his own mind. "We should all prove ourselves simples if we believed my Lord Howe intended to hold his hand at this time, when we are very nearly the same as whipped, and once the work does begin, it will be all the hotter because of having been delayed a little."

"Then you think the cause is lost," I said sadly, for it was in my mind before the captain spoke that we Americans could not hold out much longer against the great force which the king had sent against us.

"Indeed I think nothing of the kind!" Thad exclaimed with more fire than he had ever displayed toward me. "If you were

not my comrade I could have it in my heart to flog you for such despondency. So long as we hold our courage the cause will progress; it is lost only after those who now support it have turned cowards. Think you we of New York are the only Americans in arms? The people of Boston and of South Carolina did not show the white feather when they were hard pressed, else had that brave show of words which we heard read at the city hall never been written."

Heated as he was, Thad would have given me a yet warmer scorching for having ventured to so much as suggest that we were whipped, but for the coming of a soldier to the dock opposite where we were anchored, who displayed a signal for us to send a boat ashore.

"There is more work for us!" Thad cried as he sprang toward Peleg's dory, which was hauled alongside.

"Let Sam and I go ashore. As the captain, you should stay here," I cried, trying to scramble into the boat before it was possible for him to do so; but he swept me aside with his arm as one might remove a trouble-

some child, and I knew that for the first time in our lives his heart was filled with anger against me.

He repented of the act almost before it was committed, however, and said in a kindly tone as he paused to give me his hand:

"I meant not those words for you, 'Liphalet. What you said was in the same vein with all that had been in my own mind a few moments before, and I turned the matter over till I saw plainly what might be the result if we lost heart in these dark days. Forgive me."

"There is no need of that between us, Thad," I said, and the tears of relief were very near my eyelids. "I know you could not be angry with me, understanding how cowardly and stupid I am."

"You shall not abuse yourself, 'Liphalet. You are as brave as the bravest when the moment of danger comes, as I have good reasons for saying."

Such praise was even harder to bear than had been his words of anger, knowing as I did that I deserved one no more than the other, and, failing in finding speech to please

me, I held him by the arm as I threw one leg over the rail.

"Let me see what the messenger wants. You should remain on board, and not answer the beck and call of a private soldier," I said.

"What a stickler you have suddenly become for the rights of rank, 'Liphalet! I had best go myself; the others are sleeping soundly, and it would be cruel to arouse them after such work as has been done. Remain in charge of the schooner, and I will meet the messenger. But for your jealousy regarding a sergeant's dignity, I would have finished the business before this."

He had leaped into the boat while speaking, and there was nothing left for me but to watch him as he pulled with vigorous strokes toward the landing place, like one who has been refreshed with rest and food, instead of, as was the case, a lad who had worked incessantly forty-eight hours.

Sam, Peleg and Clark had turned in as soon as might be after the Laughing Mary's anchor was down, leaving Thad and I on watch, and he was, as I have shown, far

more mindful of their comfort than of his own privileges as captain of the schooner.

I saw him step ashore, hold a short converse with the soldier, and then return hurriedly.

It seemed certain more work had been found for us, and but for the fact that he pulled alongside so quickly I might have aroused the others of the crew, believing we were to get under way at once.

"Where are we going?" I cried as he came over the rail.

"We shall stay here. You are the one who is to go," he said with a smile, and I stood looking at him stupidly. "Colonel Tupper has sent the messenger to say that Colonel Willett would have speech with Corporal Willett at headquarters, and at once."

"It must be you whom he wants to see," I stammered, for I doubted not that my uncle had work cut out for the Laughing Mary, and it was with her commander he wished to talk.

"The soldier has come for you, and I reckon it will be safer to obey the summons at once than to stand there on the chance of

Colonel Willett's having made a mistake," Thad said laughingly, and by this time I began to get my wits together.

I knew full well there must be no delay, even though it should be proven I was not the one wanted, and because so much time had already been spent through my thick-headedness, I did not wait for other furbishing than to slip into my uniform coat.

Thad, still unwilling to call either of the others from below, rowed me ashore, and said while doing so:

"Remember, 'Liphalet, that we are ready for anything Colonel Willett may want done. He thinks we are tired out, and has sent for you instead of me that he shall have no trouble about learning exactly our condition. Don't let on that any of us need sleep, but make it appear as if we were rusting for lack of work."

"You need not be afraid, Thad, that I shall put on a poor mouth, or betray my cowardice. I will represent the Laughing Mary as ready for sea at a moment's notice, with the crew standing by the halliards hoping for sailing orders."

Then we were at the landing place, and as I stepped ashore Thad said to the soldier:

"This is Corporal Willett."

"You are required to come to headquarters at once," the man said as he saluted, and I bade him lead the way, meaning to have him where he could give evidence in case it should be proven I was not the person wanted.

While following the messenger I was struck by the air of confusion on every hand.

Squads of soldiers loitered around the streets, or disposed themselves indolently in the doorways of warehouses as if not knowing where to go, or what to do. The sidewalks were littered with camp equipage of every kind until one would have said the American army had dropped all its baggage in New York that the men might continue their flight unimpeded.

It was a sight to sicken one who had the good of the cause at heart, for it told that our soldiers were now little better than stragglers—that the army had become a rabble.

Had Lord Howe made an attack on the

city that day I believe of a verity he could have worked his will with but little opposition.

"Is there no regular place of encampment?" I asked of the man who was guiding me.

"Yes, and these fellows will soon find their way to it; but just now discipline is forgotten even by many of the officers."

"Suppose the enemy come this very hour?"

"These men might fight, but I should sooner say all hands would run away. However cleverly General Washington has contrived to bring our troops off from Long Island, it is none the less a retreat, and every private knows it as well as does his superior officer. The soldiers are dispirited because of the failure."

"It will be disaster, instead of a failure that can soon be remedied, if the men lose heart so readily," I said, speaking as stoutly as I could, but wishing Thad was there to talk as he had to me a few moments before.

The soldier shrugged his shoulders much as if to intimate that disaster was already upon us; but he held his peace, and I was

too sore in mind, because of what could be seen on every hand, to say anything more, even though I realized it was my duty to arouse his courage.

Arriving at the headquarters where my comrades and I attended the military court, I found matters much as they were on the streets through which we had passed, except that there was a greater show of activity, and in a short time I was standing before Colonel Willett, saluting him in proper fashion.

"You are in command of the schooner Laughing Mary," he said as if speaking to a stranger.

"Thad Burr is the captain, sir," I replied quickly, knowing now of a truth that he had sent for me under a misapprehension. "I am only the second mate."

"Yes, yes, I understand all that. You three are comrades, and it has been simply decided among you that he is to be in command."

I bowed, not knowing what to say, for I was growing bewildered again.

Surely Thad was the captain, whether we

had elected him or he been given that position by Colonel Tupper, and if my uncle wanted to talk with the commander of the schooner I had no business there.

"How many men have you on board now?" he asked suddenly.

When I replied to this question he bade me tell him more regarding Peleg and Clark.

"What I want to know," he added, "is if they may be trusted as I can trust you?"

I answered this by assuring him I was convinced Clark to be honest and loyal; that he had had no hand in the mutiny until forced to it by press of numbers. As for Peleg, what he had already done was sufficient proof of his devotion to the cause.

Colonel Willett listened patiently while I talked, and seemed convinced by my words, for when I had come to an end, having praised the fisherman and the soldier until nothing more could be said, he took my hand.

"There is work to be done, and I am charged with its performance, Eliphalet," he said in a most kindly tone. "Those who engage in it must be such as can be trusted implicitly, and I know of no one for whose

honor and honesty I can vouch better than the son of my brother. Will you and your comrades undertake what may be in the highest degree dangerous?"

I could make no better reply than to repeat what Thad had said to me before I came away, and he seemed pleased.

"Your mother left the city this morning with my family, therefore you——"

"Why has she gone?" I cried, forgetting my manners as I thus interrupted him.

"It was by my advice—I might almost say my commands. It appears positive we shall have hot work here before many days have passed, and all the non-combatants who can do so have fled. I only spoke of her departure that you might know you no longer had any ties to hold you here."

"Are we going very far away, sir?" I asked, growing bewildered again, and almost disheartened, for I now understood that my uncle believed the cause to be in desperate straits.

"Not many miles; but it may be some time before you can return, and there must be no delay in setting forth."

I could have cried out with impatience because he did not tell what it was we were called upon to do, and yet dared not ask him to hasten the explanation.

"I will take your word for it that all on board the schooner are as willing to serve in a desperate undertaking as you, therefore return to your comrades, and call on the commandant of the battery for the supply of ammunition and arms which Colonel Tupper has bespoken. See to it you have a goodly store of provisions, and that everything is in readiness for sailing as soon after the sun has set as may be required."

He ceased speaking as if having finished with the matter on hand, and after waiting a moment I asked:

"Where are we to go, sir?"

"That you will know later. There is no reason why the secret should be in your keeping a single moment before it is necessary to impart it."

Had Thad been in my place he would not have asked this last question, and, therefore, it would not have been told us that even we ourselves were not to be trusted concerning

the work for us one whit more than could be avoided.

I still lingered stupidly, not having my wits about me sufficiently to go after I had been dismissed, and Colonel Willett, a trifle more kindly perhaps because of the kinship, said as he again took me by the hand:

"I desired to speak with you first, Eliphalet, so that you might tell me if there was any question your comrades would not embark willingly in what can bring little or no glory, and yet be beset with danger. Had you doubted the temper of your friends I should have cast about for others; but as it is I am convinced the work will be done faithfully, and you should not be hurt because the explanations are left until later. When older grown, you will understand that precaution is better than cure."

He walked, still holding my hand, toward the door while speaking, and having come to an end I found myself not only dismissed, but put out of the apartment very neatly.

It can well be believed that I made all speed to rejoin my comrades, once I was on the street, and on arriving at the shore there

was no need to signal, for Thad leaped into the dory instantly I came in view.

Without waiting until we were on board the schooner, I told him the result of the interview, repeating so far as I was able the exact conversation which had ensued between my uncle and myself.

"We could ask for nothing better," he said in a tone of satisfaction when my story had come to an end.

"You say that even before learning what we called upon to do," I cried impatiently.

"We know it is of great importance, otherwise your uncle would not be so cautious, all of which is enough for me. He shall see that, though we be only boys, we can do the work of men."

"Then you are satisfied to go ahead blindly?"

"We shall not be doing so. The secret must be told before we leave, and what more is needed?"

I was irritated that he had no more curiosity, and was nigh to having a fit of the sulks because of his rejoicing at something he knew not of; but even though I raved

Thad would hardly have taken heed, so intent was he on making the Laughing Mary ready for this secret expedition.

"Call all hands," he said as we came alongside the schooner. "We will soon warp her in to the dock and take on our supplies. Clark must see to the rations."

Before five minutes had passed we of the Laughing Mary were working as busily as though bound on a voyage of pleasure, and all the while I wondered and puzzled my brain over what it might be my uncle proposed that we should do.

Sam was quite of my thinking, that it would be better to wait before rejoicing at this new turn of affairs, until we knew what lay in our path; but Peleg seemed as elated and content to remain in ignorance as Thad.

Clark had no time to join in the discussions which arose while we were warping the Laughing Mary into the dock, or as we waited the pleasure of the commandant of the fort, for it was necessary he should draw such rations as the quartermaster could furnish, and in order to do this he must spend much time on shore.

So great was my faith in his sincerity that I gave no thought to possible treachery.

Although he, like us, was ignorant of what would be required, much harm might have been worked by his stating the fact of our being sent away on a secret mission, yet I had no question as to his honesty.

There is never a crew who could have worked harder than we did, yet it lacked less than an hour of sunset when the schooner was hauled out from the shore ready for a cruise.

We had on board ammunition enough for half a dozen such vessels as the Laughing Mary, and would not have burdened ourselves with so much but that the commandant insisted on our taking it because of orders previously given by Colonel Tupper.

When Clark made his request for rations he was supplied most liberally, and before all the provisions had been taken aboard I began to mistrust we were to make a sea voyage.

Then, our preparations complete so far as we could say, there was nothing for it but to await the coming of Colonel Willett, or some

one whom he might send, to bring the final orders.

It can well be supposed that we speculated much upon our probable destination, and Thad did not hesitate to join in this, even though he had claimed to be well satisfied simply by knowing we were bound somewhere on important work.

The sun had set, but it was not yet night, when my uncle and Colonel Tupper suddenly appeared over the port rail while we sat watching the city front expecting them to come from that direction.

They had arrived in a whale boat pulled by two sailors, and, judging from the appearance of the oarsmen, I fancied the journey had been a long one, which puzzled me not a little.

Thad saluted the visitors, while I stood stupidly staring at the boat as if there was nothing else to hold my attention, but I was speedily aroused to a sense of duty by hearing Colonel Willett say sharply, much as though we had done something which displeased him:

"We will talk with you lads in the cabin.

Leave Peleg and Clark on deck to stand watch, and let them see to it that we are neither disturbed nor overheard."

The fisherman heard this order, for we of the Laughing Mary were standing closely together, and immediately he walked forward, followed by Clark, while my comrades and I went below led by our visitors.

It was Colonel Willett who opened the conversation, and he evidently did not intend to spend many moments in making the necessary explanations.

"You are well aware that two British frigates are above the city in the North River. It is likely more will join them speedily, either to invest Fort Lee or to cut us off from it, therefore you can go up the stream with more ease now than would be possible at a later date."

He ceased speaking for an instant, and I was on the point of again proving myself a simple by asking questions, when a look from Thad checked me.

"Do you know Dobb's Ferry?" Colonel Willett asked of no one in particular, and Thad replied:

"I have never been there; but it will not be difficult to find the place, sir."

"At such an hour to-night as may seem best to you, get the schooner under way, and proceed to that point. Once there make yourselves familiar with the country round about White Plains, and keep close watch for suspicious-looking persons who may be loitering in the vicinity. You need not go out of your road to find such, but take good care none are allowed to remain in the neighborhood. You will engage in this work until receiving further orders."

It was the blindest kind of a puzzle to me, for these were apparently all the commands we were to receive, and I saw that Sam was quite as much perplexed; but Thad acted as if it was plain sailing in his mind, and asked quietly:

"Are we to make prisoners of any persons who seem to us enemies of the cause?"

"Yes; unless you might be opposed by too great a force. It is not simply an enemy whom you are to watch for, but one who appears to be trying to gain information. Should you find a British force there, word

must be sent at once to the headquarters of our army."

"The tide will serve us at ten o'clock, sir, and if the wind holds we will leave then," Thad said as he saluted, and without further parley our visitors went on deck, leaving Sam and I looking at each other as if we had nothing better to do.

"Can you understand it?" I asked irritably.

"No more than if we had been asked to stand on our heads a few hours. But look at Thad! He says we will get under way at ten o'clock, as if he made no account of the two frigates in the stream! There isn't a cloud in the sky, and their gunners will have an easy time peppering the little schooner. Instead of bringing up at Dobb's Ferry, we have considerably more chance of going to the bottom."

"It all seems like a piece of foolishness to me," I cried, and before more could be said we heard Thad calling for us to come on deck.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNEQUAL BATTLE.

As I followed Sam up the companionway, it was in my mind to tell Thad exactly my opinion regarding the attempt to run past the British frigates on a night when the stars were shining so brightly that the schooner would be seen almost as plainly as if there was a moon, but before gaining the deck I thought better of it.

Knowing my own timorousness even better than any one else could, I said to myself that perhaps I was the only member of the crew who looked at the matter in such a light, and it would not appear seemly in me to object when all the others were ready, therefore I waited to hear how my companions might view the venture.

Thad had called us on deck that we should set about a careful examination of the running-rigging, and also to make ready for get-

ting under way at an instant's notice, and during half an hour or more all hands were busily engaged.

I was forward overhauling the jib when Peleg joined me, he having nothing better to do just at the moment.

He was the one man who best knew the danger of such an attempt as we were about to make, and had always shown himself so close-mouthed that I felt certain he would not repeat to Thad anything I might say to him.

"I reckon you know what we're going to do this night?" I began by way of starting the subject.

"I've heard the captain tell what he counts on doin'; but I allow no man knows exactly what will be done."

"Do you believe we can run past the frigates?"

"I don't, an' that's a fact. It doesn't stand to reason the thing can be accomplished."

"But we came past the whole fleet and never started so much as a rope."

"There's a big difference 'twixt now and then, lad. The night was black as ink when we run through the Narrows, an' a thunder

gust was not only helpin' us along, but mixin' up for the Britishers. We got close aboard before they knew we was anywhere around; but it won't work that way to-night. They' ll see us from the minute we leave our anchorage, and be ready to make it hot for us when we're within range."

"Then you don't think we ought to make the attempt?"

"I didn't say that, lad. The captain has had his orders, an' they must be obeyed."

"And you have nothing to say against them?"

"I'd be a mighty poor kind of a stick if I kicked agin orders, an' my room would be better than my company. Since Colonel Willett says we must try to do it, the thing is settled; but it ain't treason to make a guess as to how the venture will turn out."

Then Peleg, our work having been finished, walked aft apparently unconcerned at the prospect of being sent to the bottom by the British guns, and I was on the point of following him when Sam came forward, halting under the shadow of the galley as he said in a low tone:

"There's nothing more to be done until word has been given to weigh anchor. Thad is in the cabin, and I want to have speech with you."

I knew from what he said while we were below that his mind was as unquiet as mine, and expected to hear him make protest of some kind against the attempt to run past the British vessels; but soon discovered that he was giving little heed to the immediate danger.

"What do you make out we're expected to do at Dobb's Ferry?" he asked sharply. "Did Colonel Willett say more to you than what I heard from his lips?"

"You know as much as I. Until he spoke in the cabin I was completely in the dark."

"Is everything plain now?"

Being so much occupied with the idea of what we were to do as soon as the tide turned, I had bestowed but little thought on the duty we would be expected to perform in case the Laughing Mary was yet afloat after the frigates opened fire upon her, but now that my comrade had broached the subject I grew perplexed again.

"We are to run up the river, if it so be we can, and there loaf around looking for suspicious persons," Sam continued, speaking with much heat. "It is here in New York the British will attack our people, and yet we are sent so far away that we shall be of no service when another battle is fought. I don't say anything of your uncle with disrespect, 'Liphalet; but I ask if you think such an order reasonable?"

"There must be something about it we don't understand."

"I should say we didn't understand anything regarding it, and I am beginning to ask myself if Colonel Willett himself knows why we are to go to Dobb's Ferry, or whether this may not be a plan to get us out of the way?"

"Anything of the kind is sheer foolishness, Sam!" I cried. "You know as well as I do that nothing could be gained by getting us out of the way!"

"Then tell me why we are to be sent up there? Why are we to take the chances of running past the frigates on a clear night simply to watch for suspicious persons miles from where danger threatens?"

Perplexed before, I was now bewildered.

Of course I scouted the idea that there could be any reason for getting us out of the way, yet at the same time it looked odd we should be ordered to incur such great danger in order to do so trifling a bit of work.

"Don't think I'm going to turn mutineer," Sam continued, speaking yet more softly. "I shall do my full duty, regardless of what may happen, and if it so be we get past the frigates, which I doubt, no one will have cause to complain that I fail to watch for 'suspicious persons;' but at the same time I would feel more comfortable in mind if we knew to what purpose we are making this venture."

Having said this Sam walked quickly away as if not wishing to hear my reply, and I was left in a most uncomfortable frame of mind.

For ten minutes or more I remained forward endeavoring to get the best of myself, and finally succeeded in mastering the worst of my fears; but try as I might, it was impossible to feel perfectly at ease regarding the attempt to run past the frigates.

When I went aft Thad was standing near the tiller as if in deep thought, and I halted close at hand in the hope something might be said concerning the business on hand, but he continued silent.

The night was clear, as I have said, and the wind which drew up through the Narrows had increased until it was a pleasant sailing breeze, but no more. With it the Laughing Mary could make five or six knots, and we might count on being within range of the British guns in not less than twenty minutes.

When this calculation had been made I was more startled than on first hearing what we must do.

Twenty minutes exposed to a shower of heavy shot, any one of which, if sent to the right spot, would sink the schooner offhand, and we might count either on being drowned or made prisoners!

"Is it worth the venture?" I asked myself, and unconsciously spoke the words so loud that Thad believed I was questioning him.

"There's never a doubt about it!" he replied emphatically. "We are bound to make

Dobb's Ferry, and it is our only course while the frigates are here."

"We take the chances not only of losing the schooner, but our own lives, simply for the purpose of watching a settlement where are neither friends nor enemies," I said bitterly.

"The order has been given, and that is enough for us."

Then Thad turned away as Sam had done, and I went into the cabin, a mutineer at heart if not in fact.

Not until the word had been passed for all hands did I go on deck again, and then the time had come when the desperate undertaking was to be begun.

The breeze held reasonably strong; the tide had turned, and the Laughing Mary's bow was toward the Long Island shore.

Forward, Peleg and Clark stood gazing intently toward the North River, where we knew the British frigates lay, and aft, Thad and Sam were leaning over the rail.

Immediately I showed myself the captain said quickly, and I noted the fact that his voice trembled slightly:

"Peleg, you and Clark jump into the dory and pull the schooner's stern around that there may be no delay after the canvas is on her. 'Liphalet and Sam will run up the mainsail, and then it's a question of all hands jumping to it till we're under way."

All was done as he had said, and when the two men came on board again Sam and I were swaying down on the fore-halliards.

Excited as I was, it seemed that I could not have counted twenty from the time the first command had been given before the Laughing Mary was forging ahead past Grand Battery.

The loungers on shore, attracted by the noise we made, gathered at the water's edge, and if it had been daylight I warrant we should have seen an expression of astonishment on the faces of all because of this mad thing we were about to do.

Thad took his station at the tiller, and Peleg joined him there.

"You are to go below, as must all the others," the captain said sharply, and I was touched to the quick, understanding what he would do.

As a rule Peleg obeyed orders without hesitation, but now he waited to ask:

"Do you count on stayin' at the helm?"

"Some one must mind the vessel."

"Then it shall be me! I'm not goin' to skulk under cover while you are here."

"There is no reason why more than one should be exposed to the fire."

"Indeed there is!" I cried, forgetting in very shame all the fears which had beset me. "Sam and I are not minded to play the part of cowards, even though we are ordered to do so."

As I spoke Sam came close by my side to show he agreed with what I had said, and Clark stood like a statue near the larboard rail.

"It is folly for all hands to thus needlessly expose themselves," Thad cried as if in a rage, and Sam replied:

"The whole venture looks to me like folly; but whatever it may be I am not willing one shall take all the chances."

"You can be of no service here."

"We shall not despise ourselves, as would be the case if your order was obeyed."

To this Thad could make no reply, and it was as if we did not breathe while standing there peering ahead for the first flash of the guns which would tell that the British gunners had seen their target.

Not until we could make out the spars of the frigates against the sky was the silence broken, and then Thad said huskily:

"You fellows can screen yourselves under the rail without being obliged to call yourselves cowards."

"So may you do the same thing if you will," Peleg quietly replied. "By putting a tackle on the tiller the schooner can be steered while all hands are lying down."

It was as if Thad had not thought of such a plan before, for he looked around quickly, and the fisherman, taking his silence for consent, at once set about clapping on a tackle.

We were not yet within range of the enemy's guns when this had been done, and soon all hands were stretched at full length on the deck, Peleg holding the steering-ropes.

As a matter of course it was necessary to raise one's body slightly now and then to

make certain of the course, but such exposure was trifling as compared with our former positions.

"We'll hug the New York shore mighty close," the fisherman said, and the words had hardly been spoken when a flash as of lightning lighted up the Jersey coast, a thunderous roar was heard; but the shot must have fallen far short of the mark, or passed high over our heads.

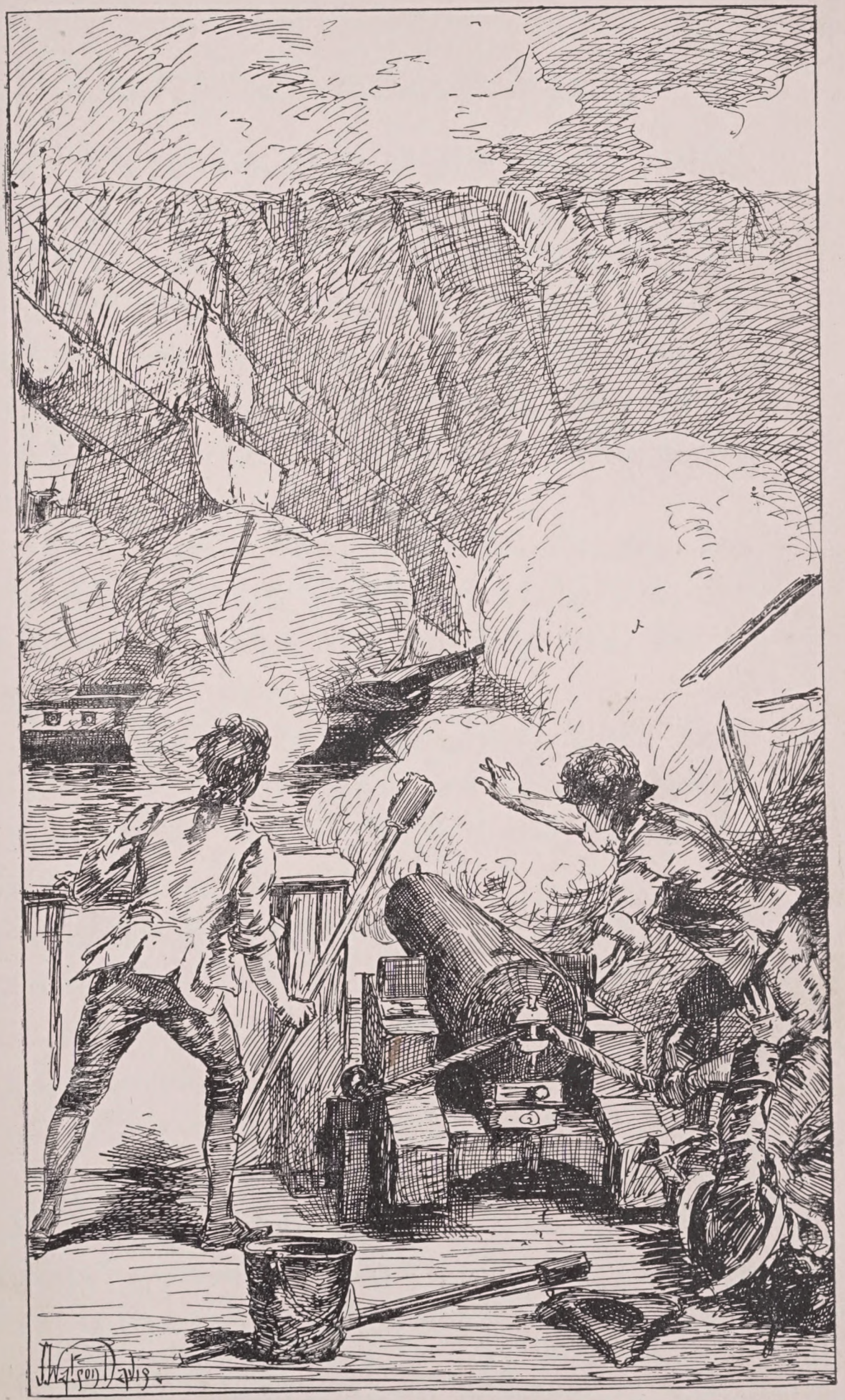
"They haven't got the range yet," I heard Sam say with a chuckle of delight, and straightway there came into my heart a feverish desire to inflict some hurt upon the arrogant Britishers.

It was to me as if all danger had suddenly passed, and I thought with satisfaction that both our guns were loaded.

Raising myself quickly I saw the frigates apparently close aboard, and that view was enough to take away the last tremor of fear.

"We won't force the Laughing Mary to keep her mouth shut all the time!" I cried savagely, and ran to the larboard gun despite Thad's warning cries.

Quickly though I moved, Clark was along-



"THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT, LADS, YOU MADE THE SPLINTERS FLY THEN," CRIED PELEG.

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side the piece almost at the same instant, and we saw, without taking much heed to the fact, a long line of fire to larboard.

This time the enemy had better range, and splinters flew in every direction as a round shot came aboard just forward the galley, plowing its way through both rails, but never touching the deck.

One of the fragments hit me on the shoulder, yet not with sufficient force to disable my arm, and like one wild with rage I sighted the piece.

Clark had already brought a brand from the galley, and in less time than I have taken in the telling, we discharged the gun at the huge hulk nearest.

There was no thought in my mind to watch the effect of the shot; I sprang to the forward cannon, shouting for Clark to help me wheel it into position, and while doing so we heard a joyful cry from Peleg:

"That's the way to do it, lads! You made the splinters fly then, an' I'm a shark if you didn't knock a few feathers out of that fine bird with the cocked hat who was standin' alongside!"

Then both he and Sam came to our aid, while in his excitement Thad stood erect at the helm.

For my part, I only knew when we discharged one or the other of our guns, and that we reloaded as rapidly as was possible.

The air appeared to be full of screaming missiles, but there was in mind no thought of danger.

Now and again I felt the little schooner reel and stagger under my feet, token of a British shot which struck her fairly, yet I had forgotten that we should probably be sunk.

More than once I saw the white splinters fly from the side of the frigate, telling that we were doing some execution with our poor cannon, and then from Grand Battery came the flashes of guns.

Our friends were watching the fight, and had fired to betoken their joy because we were replying to the enemy's salutes in such good fashion.

Whether an hour passed, or only five minutes, I could not have told, so consuming was the fever upon me; but I know we had

loaded and discharged our small cannon until they were so hot as to be painful to the touch when Clark suddenly gave a most terrible scream, and instantly I was deluged with blood.

It shone out vivid in the dim light, seeming to me more like a stream of fire than life-fluid, and yet I felt no sorrow—my rage increased until it was only with great difficulty that I could breathe.

"Load her again! Load her again!" I cried, wheeling the gun around unaided, which would have been impossible in a calmer mood, and Peleg, blackened until he looked like an African, emerged from the hold with fresh ammunition.

Thad sprang to my side, and even in the excitement the knowledge came into my mind that he had lashed the helm in order to have his share of the battle.

Even as he laid hold of the rammer there was a crashing sound from above; the splinters flew around me in a shower, and Peleg dropped his burden to run to the helm.

"What is it?" Sam asked in a choking

voice, for his throat was dry and scorched with the burning powder.

"The head of the foremast has been splintered," Thad cried, looking aloft only an instant, and then continuing the work of recharging the piece. "She holds yet, and we can get in another shot!"

"Run below, you fellows!" Peleg cried. "That last ball struck us below the water line, an' there's work to be done in the hold unless we count on goin' to the bottom!"

Sam and Thad were serving the gun by this time, and I turned to obey the summons; but stumbled over the lifeless body of poor Clark, when, believing me to be wounded, both comrades sprang to my side.

"Go on with your work; I'm not hurt!" I shouted as I rose unaided to my feet, and all three would have returned to the gun again but that Peleg cried angrily:

"Below! Get below, all hands! There's work there in plenty!"

Thad and Sam dropped into the hold like a flash, and I waited only long enough to discharge the loaded cannon before following.

There was indeed work here, and for an

instant it seemed as if we had delayed too long before obeying Peleg's order.

The Laughing Mary was grievously wounded in the hull eight or ten inches below the water line, and the water was pouring in until it seemed she must be drowned before we could so much as lift a hand.

But for the fact that Peleg had taken the precaution to light a lantern and hang it on one of the deck-beams when he first came down for ammunition we might have gone to the bottom without knowing how badly the little craft was hurt; but the illumination was sufficient to show the damage, and we set about repairing it to the best of our ability.

The hammocks left by the mutinous soldiers were yet hanging, and Thad stuffed one of these into the gaping wound, while Sam and I fastened another over it by straps of scantlings torn from the bunks.

We had only closed the hole partially, for the water still poured in, yet not in such volume but that we might keep the little schooner afloat by use of the pumps.

It was not necessary such work should be

attended to at once, for she would float yet many hours before swamping.

Then we went on deck, scrambling over each other in our eagerness to give the Britishers a further proof of our willingness to fight; but there was no longer an opportunity.

"It's all over!" Peleg shouted. "We're beyond range, an' with all their pepperin' are still on top of water!"

It did not seem possible to me we had really passed both vessels, and I ran aft, where I peered into the gloom until the spars of the frigate could be seen far astern.

Not until that moment did I realize all which had been done, and as the knowledge of the danger to which we had been exposed came over me like a flood, I reeled against the rail sick, dizzy, and in mortal terror.

"Look out for that lad!" I heard Peleg shout, and the words came to me faintly as if from afar off, after which all was a blank.

I could have cried with vexation when I again had consciousness and realized that I had fainted like any woman, when I should have stood bravely erect like my companions.

"I know how it is, 'Liphalet," Thad said in a soothing tone, "and but for the fact that you needed assistance I'm not so certain I should have been able to fight off the sickness which came upon me."

"I'm a coward!"

"If there was fifty such cowards aboard this 'ere schooner I'd agree to give them frigates a mighty hot fight," Peleg said grimly, and I was so foolish as to be pleased with the words.

The Laughing Mary was speeding up the river like a frightened thing, wounded in many places, but yet sailing bravely on as if rejoicing despite her pain at having carried us safely past the point of danger.

As I staggered to my feet, still sick and dizzy, the body of poor Clark lay directly before my eyes. He had atoned for the one mutinous act in his life, and died with his face to the enemy, as a brave man should.

At this moment the fear of death was taken from me, for I understood as never before that such deaths, and many of them, would be necessary before the independence we claimed would be ours.

Sam and Thad took the mangled body up tenderly and placed it in a hammock, while I worked the pump, and when the shroud had been laced around the brave fellow ready for the grave, the corpse was placed on the deck aft that he might remain close by us as long as possible.

Having cared for the dead it was high time we attended to the safety of the living, and this Peleg insisted should be begun by a careful examination of the Laughing Mary's hull, lest peradventure she had received serious hurt of which we were as yet ignorant.

Twenty-two times, as was ascertained by actual count, had the little schooner been struck by the British balls, and yet the most serious mischief was at that place where we had made the temporary repairs.

The head of the foremast was shattered, but the spar itself appeared as strong as ever.

Fourteen holes did we see in the sails, showing where cannon balls had passed through at short range; the rigging was cut in half a dozen places, and the rails rent and torn the entire length.

Save for the wound in the hull, there was

nothing to prevent our continuing the voyage to Dobb's Ferry; but the water gained rapidly upon us, despite active work at the pump, and Peleg finally said, after working the brake a long time in silence:

"She'll sink under us, lads, if we don't beach her till that 'ere hole can be plugged in proper fashion."

"May it be done without further injury to the vessel?" Thad asked, fearing lest we might lose the Laughing Mary even after she had come out with flying colors after the storm of British iron.

"Bless you, lad, she'll be none the worse for layin' on the sand a bit, no more than was the case on Barren Island. I'm not minded to do anything to disable her, because our friends in New York will give the Laughing Mary a proper reception in return for what has been done this night, if it so be we ever take her back."

CHAPTER XVII.

AT DOBB'S FERRY.

By Thad's request Peleg took it upon himself to direct affairs after it was decided to beach the schooner until she could be repaired, and the day was just breaking when he ran her into a small cove, where she was anchored fore and aft until the receding tide should leave her on the sands.

This done we set about giving to Clark a soldier's burial, as was his due after having proved himself to be a brave man.

The body was carried ashore in the dory, and there we all took a turn at fashioning the grave, for each was eager to show his appreciation of our companion, and the sun came up from behind the hills just as we laid him in his last resting place this side the glorious land of light.

Thad spoke a prayer while we knelt, and then the four of us fired a volley over the mound of sand, after which we walked slowly

back to the water's edge where for an hour or more we remained in silent communion, each with his own thoughts, for at such times a fellow's mind dwells upon the possibilities of the future.

Perhaps, and very likely, before this seemingly foolish cruise had come to an end, more than one of us would be laid away in the same manner, or, through lack of time, be thrown overboard with a shot at the feet nevermore to be seen until the dead are summoned to life again.

It was well for me that we had plenty of hard work immediately after this sad hour, for gloomy forebodings depressed my spirits until I was once more a quaking coward.

The Laughing Mary had been put on the shore in such fashion that she could not be strained in any part, and immediately the tide went down Peleg began his task of patching the hull, setting about the work as if familiar with it.

Now that Clark was gone we had no cook, and I took this duty upon myself, although with very little knowledge of what should be done.

It did not hearten a fellow to go into the galley where everything told of the companion who had given up his life for the cause, but such thoughts could not be indulged in, and I strove very hard both to hold my fears in check and to prepare food such as would be palatable.

We all understood that the Laughing Mary was doomed if the Britishers should send a boat's party up the river before she was afloat again, to see what had become of us; but that was one of the chances it was necessary to take, and we consoled ourselves by keeping vigilant watch, resolving to fight in defense of the schooner as long as life lasted.

Because of my new duties I did not see how Peleg repaired the injury done the hull; but Thad assured me it was done in a most workmanlike fashion, despite the fact that both proper tools and materials were lacking.

Save to repair the damage wrought the running-rigging, we gave no heed to the mischief above the decks, and by nightfall were waiting for the tide to put the schooner on an even keel.

The enemy had not shown himself eager to

meet us again, as Sam put it; but of course no search was made for the schooner, because it must have been believed she had gone much further up the river, and Peleg congratulated all of us over and over again on the fight we made.

"Yesterday at this time I made up my mind we had started on our last cruise, for it didn't stand to reason the schooner would live to get past the frigates; but now it's been done, we may make some kind of a showin' at what we have in hand."

I understood from the fisherman's tone that he could gain no better idea of the task set us than had Sam and I, and asked with a side-glance at Thad:

"Do you believe we will have anything to do, Master Symonds?"

"To tell the truth, lad, I don't, an' why we're sent on such a wild-goose chase beats me."

"It isn't necessary any of us should understand it," Thad replied bravely. "We are poor kind of soldiers, or sailors either, for that matter, if we insist on having everything explained before we're willing to

turn to in proper fashion. There is good reason for us to make the trip, otherwise Colonel Willett would not have sent us past the frigates, and in due season we shall most likely know it."

No one cared to continue the conversation after this reproof, and we talked but little until the rising tide liberated the gallant vessel which had borne us so bravely since the day we first stepped on her deck.

It was my watch below immediately after we got under way, and when I was awakened by Thad shortly after sunrise, the Laughing Mary lay at anchor off Dobb's Ferry.

"There was nothing to prevent our making a quick passage," the captain said when I came on deck. "The wind held until daybreak, and by that time we had arrived. You and Peleg will look out for the schooner until breakfast is ready, when Sam and I are to be called."

Symonds had followed me on deck, and after taking one look around he went into the galley, saying as he did so:

"You can have an eye out, lad, an' I'll

tend to the breakfast. You may be a good hand at fightin'; but I ain't in love with your cookin', so count on seein' what I can do at the job."

I would have gone into the galley with him thinking there was no need for standing a very strict watch, but he stopped me by saying:

"It stands us in hand to have our weather-eye liftin' all the time, lad, an' you can do no better than stay on deck. I've been turnin' over in my mind what the captain said last night, an' the business wears a different look by this hour. Of course we're needed here, else Colonel Willett never would have taken the chances of losin' such a craft as this, so it's reasonable to believe there are, or may be, enemies loiterin' round."

I immediately began pacing to and fro on the deck, determined the work should not suffer because of my neglect, even though I might believe it useless; but until the time breakfast was made ready I had seen no living thing on the water or the shore.

It is not well to attempt to set down here everything which was done day by day, for

the record of one twenty-four hours' doings would read much the same as all the others.

That Thad was thorough in the slight duty we had been ordered to perform, it is needless to say. He first made a careful examination of the shore on each side of the river, after which we scoured the surrounding country until all were familiar with every road and bypath.

As a matter of course we saw many people; but never one who could be called "suspicious" in any sense of the word, and more than once before a month had come to an end did Sam and I say to each other that we were sent to this place only that we might be kept out of harm's way.

There was absolutely nothing which occurred during these many days worth being set down here, until, when the month of September was more than half spent, on a certain afternoon while I was standing watch on deck, with Thad below writing in his logbook, and Sam and Peleg on shore watching for "suspicious" persons, a small boat rowed by one man suddenly appeared coming up

the river close to the bank as if desirous of remaining hidden from view.

Instantly I was on the alert, although there was no reason to suppose the newcomer other than some farmer bent on paying us a visit for the purpose of selling his garden truck, and as if I had been correct in such surmise, the craft was headed directly toward the schooner.

Instead of boarding us without as much as asking permission, as many had already done, however, the stranger ceased rowing while he was yet twenty yards away, and shouted:

"What schooner is that?"

"The Laughing Mary," I replied, for though this man might be an enemy I was not minded to refuse him the information, certain that whatever might happen the little vessel would give as good an account of herself as on the night we ran past the frigates.

"Are you the captain?" the stranger continued.

Hearing the sound of voices Thad came on deck just in time to hear this last question and reply to it.

But even this was not information enough for the man.

"Is your name Thaddeus Burr, and have you on board one Eliphalet Willett?"

"Yes to both questions. My name is Burr, and yonder stands Willett. Now it is but fair to tell why you desire such information."

"I have come from Colonel Willett with a message," and the man began to pull toward us.

My heart was in my mouth at these words, for they not only told that we were yet remembered, but gave promise of our soon having something better to do than loitering around the landing.

The man came on board as soon as might be, and handed Thad a packet on which was superscribed his name.

I, eager to learn the news, crowded close by his side that I might read with him; but gained very little knowledge thereby.

On the sheet were written only these words:

"The bearer has my fullest confidence, and will deliver by word of mouth that which I would say."

It was signed with my uncle's name, and after one quick glance at the handwriting I turned toward the stranger.

"My name is Silas Deane," he said, "and I am come from Colonel Willett yesterday. He wishes to know if you have seen enemies roundabout, either Tories or Britishers?"

"Neither the one nor the other. We have lain here all these days meeting none but the farmers who live near by, and wasting our time and our country's money," Thad replied, and I rejoiced that he spoke thus sharply.

"Nothing has been wasted," Master Deane said quietly. "I am instructed to explain that your vessel was sent to this place because the commander-in-chief had already laid his plans to make a stand near by if the fortunes of war went against him, and it was in the highest degree necessary he should know whether the British were aware of his plans. There have been traitors in the American camp, and may yet be."

"But for our army to come here would be a retreat," Thad cried, quick to catch the meaning of such a movement, while I might

have puzzled my brains over it an hour without hitting the truth.

"Exactly; the American army are retreating. Since the battle of Harlem Heights——"

"Have our people fought a battle?" I cried, forgetting in the excitement my manners.

Master Deane was a long while in making us acquainted with all that had happened since the night we left New York, and instead of trying to repeat his words it will be enough to set down the facts, unpleasant though they be to write.

As is well known now, though to us it was bitter news at that moment, on the third day after our departure the frigate Rose, having in tow thirty boats, sailed past our batteries up the East River. On the 12th of September thirty-six more boats went up, and twenty-four hours later four frigates and six transports joined the Rose.

All these preparations meant an attack by the Britishers, and it was decided to evacuate New York. Our sick and wounded were taken by such modes of conveyance as could best be procured to King's Bridge, but

before the troops were out of the city the enemy landed.

On the 15th of September our men fled before the redcoats like whipped curs, but on the 16th at Harlem Heights the Americans stood their ground and flogged the Britishers in fairly good shape.

Then came the question of making another move, for our people were in a dangerous position despite the fact of having won the battle, and Thad and I began to realize that our coming to Dobb's Ferry had not been useless.

We assured Master Deane that the enemy had not shown himself thus far since our arrival, and, thinks to Thad's industry and custom of making notes, it was possible to give fullest particulars concerning those who lived in the immediate vicinity.

"You have employed your time well," our visitor said when the captain had given him all the information gained; "and although there has been little chance for glory, and a possibility of great danger, you have served the cause better than could have been done in any other position. The fight with the

frigates is known to every one in and around New York, and I have seen some very clever verses which give you all most lavish praise."

"When we heard the guns from Grand Battery we knew our friends were watching," and Thad's eyes brightened with pardonable pride as he spoke.

"Every one who could get down to the water front saw the gallant attack you made. It was a sight well worth looking at, and of the most intense interest to those who knew what a puny craft was engaging the mighty frigates. General Putnam referred to it on parade as a bright example of faithfulness to orders. You lads are famous among our friends, and it is to be hoped you will reap a rich reward some day."

"We have received that within the last half-hour, sir," Thad said, and I could have hugged him for the apt reply.

Master Deane then described the scene near Grand Battery while we were engaged with the enemy; told of the cheers that went up when it was learned we had passed the frigates in apparent safety, and repeated the comments he heard made by citizens, until I was so

puffed up with pride as to forget what a price we had paid in blood for such praise.

I was yet mentally patting myself on the head for having taken part in so glorious an action, and giving little heed to anything save what I had done, when Master Deane suddenly went over the rail into his boat.

"Is he going so soon?" I asked Thad, disappointed because I could not hear more regarding our achievement.

"He must rejoin the army to-morrow morning, and cannot stop even for food."

His boat was yet in sight when Peleg and Sam returned, and, as a matter of course, we told them of the news.

Saddened though we were by the tidings of defeat, all felt more comfortable in mind than we had for many a long day, because we now knew that ours had not been a useless voyage.

We speculated upon what would happen when the American army was encamped in the vicinity; as to where the next attack would be made, and held long converse regarding the excitement caused by our engage-

ment with the frigates, until the night came before we so much as thought of supper.

Then Peleg and I went into the galley bent on preparing a regular feast, so happy were we, and during the next hour heard nothing from our comrades save when one or the other looked in upon us to ask when it would be possible for them to appease their hunger.

We, meaning Peleg and I, were making a great clattering of pots and pans when suddenly Thad's voice rang out sharp and distinct:

"Ahoy in the boat! What do you want?"

"Is this the Laughing Mary?" I heard a voice in the distance ask, and as I turned to look out Thad answered "Yes."

I had not yet gained the door of the galley when the report of a musket was heard, and the echoes had hardly died away as one of my comrades, I do not know which, shouted:

"On deck lively, boys, the redcoats are upon us!"

It was like being aroused from a pleasant dream, and as usual I played the part of a stupid by lingering in amazement so long that

Peleg was at the rail many seconds before I so much as thought of venturing out.

Then I was roused to action by hearing Thad cry:

"Bring up the spare muskets from the hold!"

Seizing the lighted lantern from the peg on which it was hung to illumine the galley, I obeyed the order, but before having fairly gained the hold half a dozen muskets were discharged, and some of the reports I knew were caused by my comrades.

Fortunately I had sufficient wit to leave the lantern below when I clambered up the ladder with as many weapons as could be grasped, and instantly my head showed above the combing of the hatch Peleg was arming himself from the supply I brought.

"Are they soldiers?" I asked, and although I tried very hard it was impossible to prevent my voice from trembling.

"Ay, lad, a score of 'em. They must have been on the opposite shore, and heard your uncle's messenger when he hailed us, else they would not have had the schooner's name on their tongue's end."

He had loaded his musket by the time he ceased speaking, and I fumbled at mine most clumsily, being shaken as if with an ague fit by the rapid reports which now sounded as coming from every side.

At last I was ready for action, but knew not which way to turn, and while I stood hesitating Thad shouted:

"This way, lads! This way lively!"

Running toward the sound of his voice I found myself in the bow of the schooner looking down on a dark mass which was swarming up the side as though hoisted from below.

"Fire! Fire and reload! Work lively now, 'Liphalet, or the schooner is lost!"

I discharged my weapon full at the scrambling mass, but it seemed almost as if I was engaged in murder until one of the fellows struck at me with a boarding-pike, tearing away the sleeve of my shirt and scratching my arm deep enough to draw blood.

Then was I seized with the same rage as when we opened fire upon the frigates, and until the boarders had been repelled I fought

side by side with my comrades, heeding not danger so that I beat back the enemy.

Peleg afterward said that this scrimmage did not last above ten minutes; but at the time I knew nothing save the fact that we must win the battle or be killed, and an hour or a second were much the same to me.

It was only when the noise of the conflict ceased that I knew we had worsted the foe, and I looked around timorously at my companions fearing lest one or more should be stretched out on the deck as I had seen Clark.

The sickening spectacle was spared me. All three were erect and apparently uninjured.

How the enemy had fared it was impossible to say, for those who fell, if indeed there were any, had been borne away by the tide.

It was Peleg who went into the hold for the lantern, and when he brought it I saw we had not come off unscratched.

Thad bore an ugly-looking gash on the cheek from which the blood had run down over his shirt until it was as if he had bathed in the red fluid.

Sam's left hand was bruised and swollen;

Peleg showed a cut on the shoulder such as seemed most dangerous, and I, from the scratch received early in the action, could produce my full share of red stains.

"It was a close shave for all hands," the fisherman said grimly as he tore away the clothing from his shoulder to come at the wound; "but I reckon we ain't much the worse for wear."

"If our injuries were all that might come from this, I could laugh at the plight," Thad replied seriously, and I, thinking his words easily understood, said:

"You believe they will return again with stronger force, and capture the schooner?"

"I was thinking neither of ourselves nor of the Laughing Mary. Master Deane is on his way back to give Colonel Willett our report. It will be believed that there are no Britishers hereabouts, and who shall say how much harm may not come to our friends? Although we told only the truth, we have deceived them, and more disaster must follow."

I gazed at him in terror.

There came into my mind the thought that our visit here was indeed worse than

useless, for had we not been sent about this business the advance of our army would have made careful examination of the ground, but now, believing the report made, such precautions might be neglected, and one need not be fully witted to understand how much mischief could be caused by the confidence placd in us.

"Some one must follow Master Deane at once," I said, speaking before reflecting.

"You are right, 'Liphalet, and the only question is, who shall it be?"

"Do any of you know which way he went?"

Thad and I stared at each other; we had not so much as asked where the American forces were encamped, but took it for granted they yet remained at Harlem Heights, and so I told Peleg.

"It's plain you do not know where this Master Deane can be found; but still I agree the venture must be made."

"There should be no delay," Thad cried. "I'll start at once, and you shall take command of the schooner, Peleg."

"I'll do nothing of the kind. You are cap-

tain an' must stick to your post. I, who am no more than a 'foremast hand, can best perform the work."

"Do you mean to follow Deane?"

"Follow him, or find Colonel Willet, it matters not which; but one or the other I'll do for certain."

Thad seized the fisherman by the hand in token that he accepted the service, while I, who coud have no voice in the selection of a messenger since the captain was satisfied with this volunteer, believed either Sam or myself might best be spared from the schooner, for it was almost certain another attack would be made upon us, and Peleg could give a better account of himself in a fight than any other member of the crew.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SURRENDER.

WHILE we were dressing each other's wounds there was ample opportunity to discuss the situation, and all found in it good cause for fear.

It did not seem probable a party of British soldiers would be so far from the fleet on any ordinary expedition, and, save for the fact of their having made an attack upon the Laughing Mary, it was not to be supposed they would come to this place unless an inkling had been had of General Washington's plans.

I argued, however, that if they came to spy upon our army or to give early information of its arrival, the attack would not have been made, since by it we had become aware of their presence, and thus gained for myself much satisfaction in the supposed fact.

Thad soon deprived me of this comforting belief by suggesting that they tried to seize

the schooner in order to prevent us from giving warning of their presence, if it so chanced we had been made aware they were in the vicinity, and this last argument seemed so likely that straightway I adopted it as my own.

All of us understood that the gravest disaster might result if we allowed our friends to remain in ignorance of what had occurred a single hour longer than was necessary, and the question of who should act the part of messenger was the only one concerning which we were at variance.

The situation appeared so serious, however, that I would not allow myself to make the slightest protest against Thad's decision, and Peleg set about making preparations for departure instantly the wound on his shoulder had received attention.

There was little for him to do save partake of the long-delayed supper, and this he did heartily, which is more than can be said for the remainder of the party.

I was so disturbed in mind the food seemed to choke me, and I noted the fact that Thad only pretended to eat.

Ours was an ugly situation, look at it in the

best possible light, and the departure of the fisherman seemed to make it more serious.

"'Cordin' to my way of thinkin'," Peleg said as he ate, "it would be a good idee to have the schooner in shape for gettin' under way in a jiffy. The canvas might be loosed ready for hoistin', an' the anchor atrip, or the cable where it could be slipped."

"Meaning that the Britishers will make another attack?" Thad said in what he intended should be a cheery tone.

"I allow they're bound to do that, an' before many hours go by. It don't stand to reason them fellers are goin' to sit down an' suck their thumbs after bein' beaten off by a lot of boys."

"Is there anything else we might do to improve the situation?"

"It wouldn't work harm if you hauled further into the stream, for as the Laughing Mary lays now it might be some time before she could gather way enough to give a boat the slip. Howsomever, it ain't for me to advise, seein's you lads have shown yourselves capable of takin' care of the schooner in worse plights than this is likely to be."

"Indeed you should give advice," I hastened to say, "and I am certain Thad will be only too glad to follow it."

"That I should," was the captain's quick rejoinder, and after reflecting a moment Peleg replied:

"I don't allow there's anything more that can be done, unless you're minded to get under way now."

"And leave our post? It isn't to be thought of!"

"I reckon not; but it was the only thing that came to my mind. It seems a slim chance you can beat off a squad of soldiers the second time; yet you're bound to make a try for it, an' if——"

He hesitated, and when I pressed him to finish the sentence, put me off by declaring that it was of no importance.

"I allow there's nothin' to keep me here any longer, and the sooner I start the sooner there's a chance of my gettin' back, which I count on doin' no matter what may be goin' on down there. Who's ready for settin' me ashore?"

Sam and I ran to the rail where was moored

the dory, and Thad tried to induce Peleg to take with him a small supply of provisions.

"It won't pay to hamper myself with anything, not even a musket. I allow to make a quick trip, an' the least cargo I carry the better."

Thus speaking, and without so much as a word of farewell to Thad, Peleg clambered over the rail, Sam and I following close at his heels.

During the few moments required to row him ashore no one spoke, but when the dory's bow grated on the sand and Peleg stepped ashore, I asked pettishly:

"Do you count on leaving without a word of farewell?"

"That's my intention, lad. Good-bys amount to little more than wind, an' no one is the better for 'em. If it so be we meet again, I'll welcome you all in great shape."

Then turning quickly, as if to prevent a reply, Peleg walked away smartly, Sam and I watching sorrowfully until he was swallowed up by the gloom.

"It ain't a very jolly look ahead," Sam said as I took my place in the dory again; but I

made no reply, for my mind was so full of gloomy forebodings that I had not the heart to talk even with my comrade.

When we returned to the schooner Thad was busily engaged making ready to receive in proper form any evil-disposed visitors who might come.

He had placed in the galley, where they could be gotten at quickly, nine loaded muskets, and near by was a goodly supply of ammunition.

The cable had been hove short, and all the canvas loosened.

"Yes, I thought it best to get this kind of work done in season," he said in reply to Sam's remark, "for there's no telling how soon we may have our hands full."

"Is there anything 'Liphalet and I can do?"

"You may help me bring the cannon aft, and load them with musket balls. In case the redcoats should succeed in gaining the deck, a couple of charges from the pieces would go far toward persuading them to leave."

I felt much easier in mind when the cannon were heavily charged, each with a double-

handful of bullets and a goodly quantity of powder, and wheeled aft either side of the companionway where they could be trained to command any part of the deck, for at close quarters they would be serviceable weapons.

This done there was nothing for it but to wait and watch, which would be harder than actual fighting.

"In case we are attacked, and the enemy attempt to come over the bow, our arrangements are made properly," Thad said thoughtfully. "We will hold them in check there if possible, and retreat aft should the battle go against us. But peradventure they take us by the stern, look out for the weapons forward."

"And if two boats come——"

"We must do the best we can, and trust that the righteousness of the cause will give us the victory."

This was not the kind of talk to hearten a fellow for what might come, and I changed the subject by speculating as to the length of time required for Peleg to make the journey to the American lines and back again.

"I believe he can do it in twenty-four hours if he is not detained. He should be here by this time to-morrow."

Such proposition caused me to feel more cheerful, and I began to believe the redcoats would not recover sufficiently from the drubbing we had given to have stomach for more fighting on this night.

There was no thought of sleeping; all hands remained on watch listening for the lightest suspicious sound, and about an hour before midnight we heard that which had been expected.

From far across the water toward the Jersey shore came the faint sound as of splashing water, and Thad said grimly:

"They are coming, lads, and it now remains to be seen whether we can unaided defend the Laughing Mary successfully."

"Why not get under way?" I asked with trembling lips. "Duty does not demand that we remain here to meet an overwhelming force, and it will be a simple matter to return to our anchorage in the morning."

"How can we leave? Not so much as a breath of wind is stirring. I did hope there

would be such a draft up the river that we might sneak out if necessary, but it has been a dead calm since midnight."

I could have bitten my tongue for having asked a question that would have shamed the veriest landsman, for I knew as well as he did how helpless the schooner was; but had given no heed, so great was my nervousness.

Softly we went forward, and from the galley each took two muskets with full horns of powder and ball.

Then, according to Thad's orders, we crouched in the foremost portion of the vessel, screened by the rail, ready to defend ourselves and the Laughing Mary to the best of our ability.

I would have been of stouter heart had the enemy approached as if trying to take us by surprise; but the fact that they continued on regardless of noise told that they must be in great force, and I so whispered to my comrades.

"The same idea was in my mind as you spoke," Thad replied gravely. "Very likely they are in two boats, in which case we can-

not hope to hold our own very long; but we'll fight till it's certain we're defeated, before offering to surrender."

It was not pleasant to hear him reply in this fashion, and I regretted having spoken.

Perhaps half an hour went by before we could see the redcoats, because of the gloom, and then my heart sank even lower than before.

Three boats were being rowed toward us, and each appeared to be filled with men.

"They don't intend to take any chances this trip," Sam whispered grimly, "and I'm thinking we shan't be in command of the Laughing Mary many minutes more."

"Ahoy in the boats!" Thad shouted. "Cease rowing or we shall open fire!"

Much to my surprise the British obeyed this command; but it was only in order to prove to us how useless would be resistance.

"You boys have made a brave fight, and it would be worse than folly to resist further," a voice from the boat cried. "My orders are to capture the schooner, and I shall do it. I have with me forty men, and you will be

wise to surrender, since by holding out longer you will only cause needless bloodshed."

Thad rose to his feet and peered into the gloom, we following his example.

That the speaker had told the truth there could be no question; had I been asked to guess how many of the enemy were there I should have said, judging from the size of the boats and the manner in which they were packed, that not less than sixty men had come to whip three boys.

"Grant a truce of half an hour, and allow me to pull alongside," the same voice continued, and I fancied he understood why Thad was erect. "I pledge my word as a British officer to bring my boats back to this position again before beginning hostilities."

"There can be no trick in that," Thad said, half-turning toward us. "It isn't likely he would try anything of the kind on a force as small as ours."

"Let him come," Sam replied, and I held my peace, not understanding at the moment why the proposition was made.

"Do you give your word that no weapon

shall be fired, and no man change his position?" Thad asked in a loud tone.

"I pledge my honor upon preserving faithfully a truce for half an hour, and on coming back to this station before opening fire, or trying in any way to molest you."

Surely the Britisher spoke us fairly, and right glad I was to hear my comrade bid him pull alongside.

As the boats advanced we saw that the officer in giving us the number of his forces had mentioned only the soldiers.

In addition to the forty of which he spoke there were no less than five sailors in each boat, thus bringing the force up to fifty-five trained to warfare who would be opposed to us. It was not possible we could hope to hold out many moments against them, and I said to myself that we would be standing hand in hand with death if a battle was begun.

"You can come on board, sir, if it so please you," Thad said with a bow when the three boats were brought to a standstill eight or ten yards away. "You doubtless know how many we number, therefore will gain no valuable information by what can be seen."

"I thank you for the permission," the officer replied courteously, and then he gave orders for the oarsmen to lay the craft alongside the schooner.

Thad received him at the rail with as much politeness as if he had been accustomed to such duties all his life, and the Britisher saluted us when, the boat having been backed away, he leaped to the deck.

"You lads have already shown so much spirit that I am glad of this opportunity to speak with you. My purpose in drawing nearer the schooner was to persuade you to surrender, rather than sacrifice your lives in a useless struggle. It is not unworthy the bravest men to yield to a force so superior as mine."

"Yet we are prepared to give an account of ourselves," Thad replied, but in no voice of boasting, as he pointed to the cannon.

"I fully expected you would be. Those guns could clear the deck twice if I were so foolish as to land my men in a body, but then there would be no opportunity to reload them. I should not give you that advantage, however. By attacking amidships, forward

and aft at the same moment, you could not so much as discharge the pieces. Blood will be spilled, unquestionably, if there is a fight. and much of it, judging from your previous exploits."

"What is your proposition, sir?" Thad asked gravely.

"That you surrender as prisoners of war."

"Giving up the vessel?"

"We shall take her under any circumstances. Are you members of the army?"

"My comrades are corporals, and I am a sergeant."

"Then let me say, and truthfully, if your superior officer were here he would advise you to make any honorable terms; it is all brave fellows like you can do under the circumstances."

"May I speak alone with my comrades?"

"Certainly. That is for you to say, since you are yet in command of this craft, and I but a visitor coming in friendly guise."

Saying this the officer walked aft, and we three drew nearer together, the same thought in the mind of each.

"He speaks truly when he says a battle must go against us," Thad began, and Sam interrupted:

"There's no question of that; look at the force."

"Are you willing to surrender without striking a blow?"

"We would be obliged to do so in the end, unless we stood to our guns until all three were shot down, and how would our position be bettered after we had killed or wounded a few of the redcoats?"

"What say you, Eliphalet?"

I could do no less than agree with Sam, although it cut me to the heart to give the little schooner over to the Britishers.

"Then it is decided," and Thad's voice trembled as he spoke.

The tears were in my eyes, and Sam turned his back to me when our comrade and captain went aft a few paces.

"We will surrender ourselves as your prisoners," he said, and the officer came forward with extended hands.

"You have chosen the only course, lad. Under the circumstances I would have no

shame in so doing were the positions reversed. Give me your paroles, and you shall be left on board free to move around the deck until such time as I have further orders concerning the matter."

This was a handsome thing for the Britisher to do, and I waited to hear Thad accept the terms; but to my great surprise and disappointment he said decidedly:

"You are very kind, sir, but I cannot accept. We are your prisoners, and will not give our paroles."

"But by refusing you force me to adopt what may be harsh measures."

"I understand that fully, sir, and whatever may be done I shall remember only your courtesy in treating with us when it was possible, with but little loss, to take forcible possession of the Laughing Mary."

"I will not urge you to reconsider the determination, and if at any time in the future it shall be in my power to render a service, I am at your command. We may convince you Americans that the British are not as black as some would paint them."

With this the officer went to the rail and

ordered the boats to come alongside, after which he called out the names of ten men who were to act as guard on board the captured schooner.

By this I understood that he did not care to take the trouble of towing her across the river, since she could be sailed over as soon as the wind sprang up.

Although I heard the names of those whom he called, it is impossible for me to say if "Barnes" was among them, yet to my surprise and deadly fear I saw that traitor come over the rail immediately in the rear of the lieutenant who had been detailed to the command of the prize.

Now I knew full well how it happened those who had previously attacked us were aware of the schooner's name, and in my mind I saw the villain searching for the Laughing Mary from the time of our departure from New York until he finally found her at this place.

Thad was looking full at the fellow when he came over the rail, but not so much as a tremor of my comrade's eyelids betrayed the fact of a recognition.

Sam, however, did not have so good a control over himself; but clutched my arm nervously while he stared at the scoundrel who had already done us so much mischief.

"Don't let him see that we are disturbed," Thad whispered sharply. "I would have fought to the death rather than come into his power; but since we are in the trap we'll bear up like men."

The officer to whom we had surrendered gave the lieutenant charge concerning us, according to which we were to be treated with the utmost consideration, although confined in the hold.

Having made these arrangements the Britisher, and he was the most kindly gentleman I have ever seen in a red coat, saluted us in due form, after which orders were given for the boats to return to the opposite shore.

Then it was that Thad motioned us to follow him into the hold, for he was not minded to be ordered below, or perhaps conducted there by Barnes himself.

The lieutenant in charge was not the gentleman his superior had proven himself to be, as we soon understood.

Coming below with a file of men shortly after we had descended, he ordered that we be searched, and not only was everything taken from our pockets, and the ammunition and spare weapons removed, but the blankets and water-cask were carried away.

He had spared us contact with Barnes, however, and greater favor could not have been granted.

Then the hatch was clapped on, and we left in a darkness so dense that it was as if I could feel it.

"Why did you refuse to give a parole?" I asked almost angrily of Thad when we were alone. "No good can be gained by bringing so much discomfort upon ourselves."

"'Liphalet, do you feel comfortable in mind at being forced to surrender the Laughing Mary?"

"Of course I don't; it cuts me as deeply as it can you."

"If we gave our paroles it would be necessary to remain inactive, no matter how good an opportunity for escape presented itself."

"But no opportunity can come while we are here."

"I am not so certain about that. If you two are agreed to take the chances I believe we can at least deprive the Britishers of this schooner, which is far more than could have been done had we stood to the guns, and, in addition, we shall prevent that villain Barnes from carrying out his intentions concerning us."

That Thad should speak thus when it seemed to me our last hope was gone caused my head to whirl, and I stood like a stupid with never a question as to what he counted on doing.

CHAPTER XIX.

SCUTTLED.

It was Sam who asked Thad for an explanation of his words, and when it had been made I straightway became more perplexed and frightened than before.

"We have at least three hours of darkness before any attempt will be made to move the schooner, and it is my purpose, if you two agree, to scuttle the little craft rather than allow her to be used by the Britishers."

"Scuttle her!" Sam cried in alarm, and I shook with fear. "It would have been better had we fought to the death, rather than be drowned here like rats in a trap."

"If we had fought they would have possession of the Laughing Mary when we were dead."

"But we should have given up our lives in the excitement of a fight. I am too great

a coward to willingly meet death here, and in such a form."

"I am not counting on our being drowned, although of course there are many chances that all of us may not escape."

"If you scuttle the schooner we must be drowned, unless the guard find out what is being done before she goes down," and I fancied I could hear Sam's teeth chattering from very fear, as I knew for a certainty that mine were.

"Listen, both of you! My plan is a desperate one, but not quite as dangerous as you suppose. This prize crew have only Peleg's dory in case the Laughing Mary sinks, and ten men would swamp her."

"Most likely any of them could swim to the shore—it can't be a hundred yards away on the starboard side."

"Less than that if anything. I am counting that some of them cannot, or dare not, swim, and of these there will be enough to load the dory."

"How does that help us?" Sam asked irritably as Thad paused for an instant.

"Even though we are Americans, and

Barnes is among the number, they will not leave us here to drown. The hatches will at least be thrown off before she goes down."

"Well?"

"It is dark, and all three of us may be able to give the redcoats the slip 'twixt here and the shore. We can swim well enough to take the chances of dropping far down the river before landing, and it will be a keen-eyed Britisher who can see a fellow's head in the water during the gloom of night."

By this time I began to get an inkling of Thad's plan, and it did not appear as desperate as when he first broached it, although at the best there was more danger than one would care to brave unless both liberty and the destruction of a British prize was the end to be gained.

I had always considered Thad quick-witted, but never before did I give him credit for so much wisdom.

If we had defended the schooner she would most surely have been made a prize, and we could not raise a finger to prevent it. By surrendering and refusing to give a parole, it might be possible to regain our liberty and

at the same time prevent the enemy from reaping any advantage through the capture.

Sam approved of the plan from the start, and we discussed the chances of giving our captors the slip in the darkness, until I suddenly realized that we had no tools with which to work, whereupon I, pluming myself upon the discovery, said ironically:

"It is a great idea, and there is no question but that it might be carried through successfully if we had something with which to scuttle the schooner. Since they have not left us so much as a sheath-knife, I'm afraid we must remain prisoners."

"I thought of that when the idea first occurred to me," Thad replied quietly, paying no more attention to my irony than if I had been a willful child. "When we broke through the bulkhead in order to get the better of the mutineers, the boards were not replaced securely, and have never been properly fastened. By pulling one or two off it will be possible to come at a chisel which I left on the cabin floor this morning."

I was overwhelmed with shame because of having allowed myself to speak in such a

tone to Thad, and he had good right to punish me as he did.

Sam feared it would take too long to scuttle the schooner with no better tool than a chisel; but the captain had answer ready for this objection.

"We might not make much headway in cutting the solid timbers, it is true; but it shouldn't be a hard job to get through where the hull was repaired on our way up the river."

"Then let's begin it at once," Sam whispered, now convinced the idea was possible. "There's no good reason why we should spend idle time thinking about what may happen. Besides, we're wasting the hours of darkness."

"I only waited to make certain you two were agreed to the plan, and intended you should have ample opportunity of counting all the chances against us. Stay you here and continue to talk, while I work at the bulkhead. The night is so warm that the redcoats are likely all on deck making themselves comfortable with our blankets and beds."

We had been standing directly beneath the hatch while this conversation was had, and as he ceased speaking Thad moved softly aft, leaving us to continue the hum of voices in case the Britishers were on the alert.

At that moment it seemed impossible for me to say a word, even though I knew how necessary it was to adopt the precaution suggested by Thad.

I was trembling violently with suppressed excitement, and so moved by thoughts of the possible danger that to speak even at random was most difficult. Not so with Sam.

I verily believe he found a pleasurable excitement in the thought of what we were about to do, and he talked as glibly as if we were safe in the American camp.

We could not so much as guess how Thad was progressing.

He made no more noise than a rat would have caused in running across a floor, and to distinguish his form in the inky darkness was impossible.

When perhaps ten minutes had passed I was startled into an exclamation of fear as I felt a hand on my neck, but instantly I real-

ized it was Thad who had come to report the progress of his work.

"I have the chisel," he whispered. "The Britishers are all on deck. Now you lads are to come with me. Take off your coats, for they will be needed."

Together we groped our way to that portion of the hold where the ball from the frigate had penetrated, and then it was I understood why the order to take off our coats had been given.

The garments were to be used to deaden any noise he might make with the tool, and Thad worked most industriously while Sam and I crouched on either side of him.

It was in the highest degree necessary that not only should the work be performed before daylight, but that the schooner should have time to settle well into the water before an alarm was given, otherwise we might not gain our liberty, and in my anxiety it seemed as if he made no progress.

"Let me take the chisel," I whispered impatiently, and at that same instant the water spurted through an opened seam, striking me full in the face.

"Press the coats down hard so I may tear off the rest of the planking," he said sharply, and we obeyed, heeding not the fact that all three were drenched to the skin.

Then Thad gave the word to let go and jump back toward the bulkhead, and as we did so the water spouted inboard in such volume as caused me to fear we should be drowned out before an alarm could be given.

Even before we were able to feel our way to the bulkhead the hold was filled knee-deep, and in my fear I would have cried aloud but that Thad prevented me by pressing his hand over my mouth.

"It is too soon to give the alarm," he whispered. "Wait till it is above our waists!"

"But we shall drown before they can take the hatch off!" I cried as soon as it was possible to wrench my mouth free.

"There's no danger, for at the last moment we can crawl through into the cabin, and it is necessary for the success of our plan that the soldiers be thoroughly alarmed on awakening."

Then came into my mind the agonizing fear

that Barnes, having once been deceived by us concerning the condition of the schooner, would insist on making us close prisoners before any attempt was made to go on shore, and I pictured my comrades and myself in his power when the Laughing Mary went down.

I believe no more than ten minutes passed before the water was nearly to our shoulders, and it was only with difficulty we could keep a foothold.

Sam began to share my fear that we should delay too long and be drowned ere the hatch could be taken off, for he, like me, had little faith in our being able to make our way through the cabin.

"We have waited as long as is safe!" he cried, and without further parley began shouting wildly for help, I joining in the outcry.

Even now I believe we should have drowned before being able to arouse the soldiers from their sleep had we depended upon our voices alone; but Thad had in mind a better way to attract attention.

Swimming in the darkness to the ladder

which led upward from the hold, he clambered upon it, striking the deck-timbers with his chisel until the trampling of feet above told that our guards had been awakened.

"Help! Help! The schooner is sinking! We are drowning!" all hands cried in the most imploring tone possible to assume, and it can well be imagined how heartily Sam and I assisted in the appeal.

The hatch was taken off only when the water had risen so high that I was forced to paddle in order to keep my head above the surface, and a frightened voice cried:

"What's going on down there?"

"The schooner is sinking!" Thad replied lustily. "The shot-hole we plugged after passing the frigates has opened, and she can't float many minutes longer!"

It was not necessary for the Britisher to ask any more questions; he saw the water which nearly filled the hold, and ran aft shrieking in terror that the schooner had foundered.

Sam and I joined Thad a few seconds after the man fled so suddenly, and he said sharply:

"Keep back out of sight! If all three of us are seen we shall be taken ashore. Kick off your shoes, and you can swim around near the edge of the hatch without attracting the attention of those who come to aid us!"

I questioned if the Britishers would think of anything save their own safety, but in this I was wrong.

We—meaning Sam and myself—had no sooner screened ourselves from view than the lieutenant appeared, and an exclamation of dismay burst from his lips as he fully realized the condition of the vessel.

"Ahoy down there!" he shouted, failing at first to see Thad, who was keeping out of sight as much as possible.

"Hello!" our comrade replied, making a great splashing as if it was difficult to keep himself afloat.

"How did this happen?"

"A round-shot went through the schooner's hull when we came up past the frigates; we patched it as best we could with such timber as could be taken from the bunks. Now the hole has opened! She'll sink under us! Help! Help!"

"Why don't you swim where I can pull you out, instead of hanging back there like a stupid?"

"My comrades are here, and the schooner will sink before I can get at them!" Thad fairly wailed, raising his voice to its utmost pitch that the soldiers might hear him.

Only this was needed to create a panic among those on deck, who must have seen how deeply the Laughing Mary had settled in the water, and I heard Barnes shout:

"Get into the boat! If the prisoners can't save themselves let them drown!"

It was as if the sound of their own voices increased the panic, and we who were listening intently understood from the noise that many were already scrambling into the boat.

To the credit of the lieutenant, even though he had used us roughly at first, I must say that he acted the part of a man in trying to rescue his prisoners, and for a moment I feared he would succeed despite all Thad's efforts to the contrary.

He urged us to paddle our way to the hatch, assuring Thad that the boat should not put off without us, and had his men

obeyed orders the plan must have failed, so far as gaining our liberty was concerned.

Fortunately for our purpose, however, the soldiers, frightened by seeing the schooner settling so rapidly in the water, shouted to the lieutenant that they would wait for him no longer, and Thad cried:

"Save yourself, sir, while there's a chance. The force of the water setting aft from the opening holds my comrades back; but all of us can swim, and if it so be there's time to save our lives, we'll come ashore yet."

"Can I do nothing to aid you?" the officer asked, disregarding the cries of his men.

"Not a thing. I'm going to help my comrades," and Thad allowed himself to sink with a loud splash in the water, but he took good care to come to the surface an instant later close by the hatchway.

We heard the lieutenant as he ran aft, and the sound of his footsteps was like sweetest music to our ears.

"Now get up to where we can hang on by the combing," Thad said in a low tone. "It would be dangerous to come out too soon."

I believed it was also dangerous to remain

where we were many moments longer, for the Laughing Mary was now so nearly under water that she might go down at any instant, and if we should be in the hold when the downward plunge was made, our chances for life would be slim indeed.

I kept my fears to myself, however, resolved not to show the white feather again that night, whatever might befall us, and when the voices of the Britishers sounded far away in the distance Thad cried:

"Now for it, lads! Work lively, but don't show your heads above the rail until we're certain of not being seen."

It was a simple matter to clamber out on to the deck, and once there Sam and I crouched low while Thad cautiously crept to the starboard rail, which, as the Laughing Mary was then lying, was nearest the shore.

He had hardly done so when we heard loud shouts of terror, mingled with the splashing of water, and Sam caught my hand with a grip that was painful, as he said:

"The dory has overset or sunk. Most likely all hands crowded into her, thinking only of gaining the shore, and at the first

careless movement she went over or down. God grant none of them be drowned."

"While you are praying it would be a good plan to put in a word for ourselves," I replied, irritated that he should be thinking only of our enemies' safety while we ourselves were in such danger. "If the schooner sinks under us, and she won't swim many seconds longer, our chances for life are small indeed."

At this moment Thad ran swiftly toward us.

"Now is our time! The dory has been swamped, and there's little fear they'll give much heed to us."

The water was nearly level with the deck as he leaped up on the rail, waiting there until we were by his side.

"Head out of the cove, and then straight down the river!" he whispered hoarsely. "Are you ready? Come!" and he dropped into the water, Sam and I following his example.

While in the hold we had put off all clothing save our breeches, and once in the water it was no more than child's play to obey the order given by Thad.

When we had taken half a dozen strokes I turned my head to look back at the little schooner, which had shown herself to be so brave a craft, and was just in time to see her settle beneath the surface of the river.

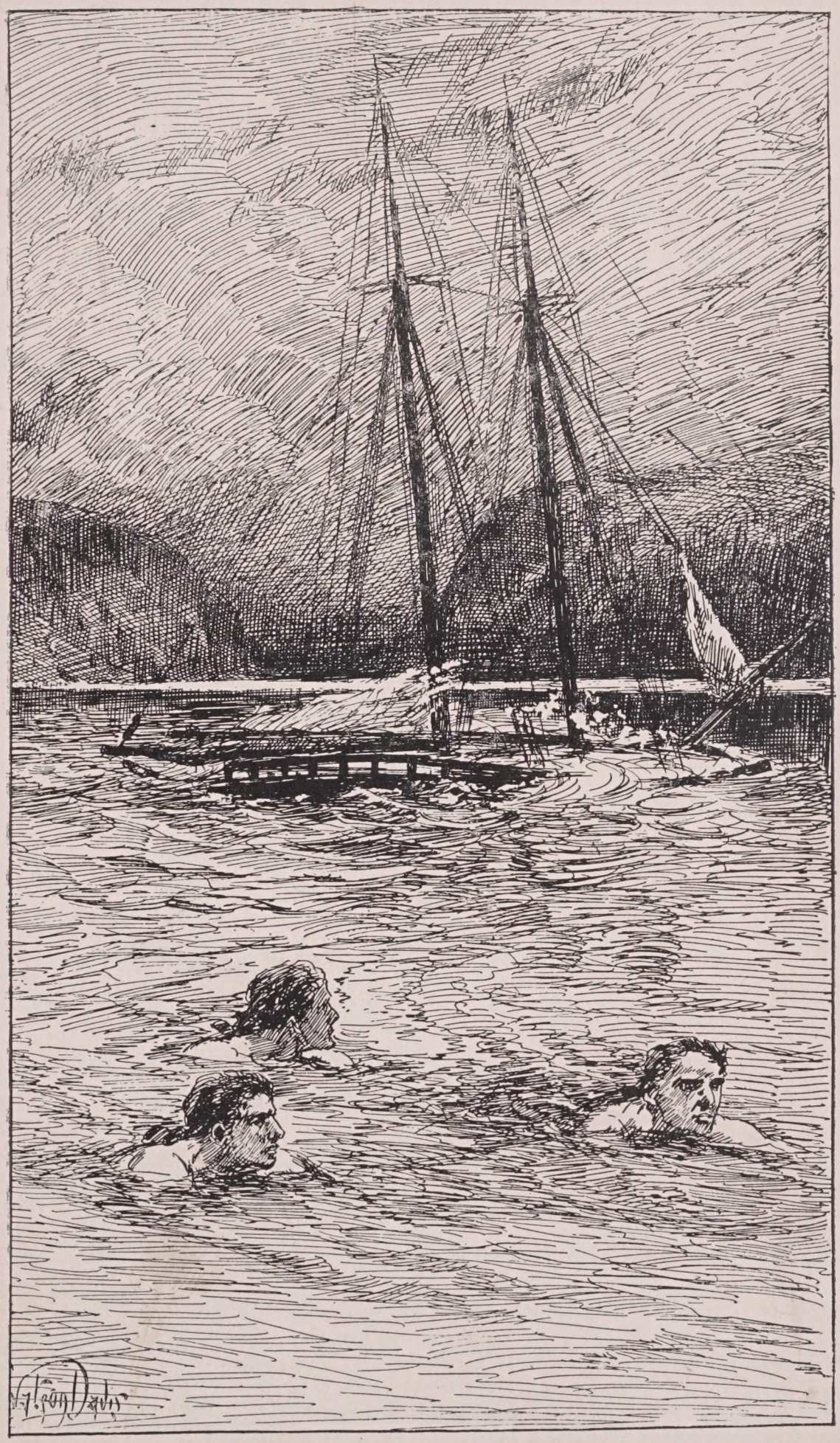
She sank on an even keel, slowly, and it was almost like looking upon the death of a comrade, so dear had she become to me, who had aided in her destruction.

We could yet hear the cries of the soldiers who were floundering in the water, and as I rounded the point which formed the cove there was in my heart true repentance for having spoken as I did when Sam spoke a prayer for the poor wretches.

To swim was as easy to my comrades and myself as to walk, and feeling that we had succeeded in all our plans, pity for our late captors replaced anger.

Now I also fervently desired that no lives be lost, even though those who were battling in the current would do their utmost to work disaster to the cause immediately they were out of danger, and among them was the traitor Barnes.

Before we were fairly in the stream the



I TURNED MY HEAD TO LOOK BACK AT THE LITTLE SCHOONER; SHE SANK SLOWLY, ON AN EVEN KEEL.

Laughing Mary, p. 384.

outcries ceased, and Thad, who was a yard or more in advance, said in a low tone:

"Some, if not all, of the squad are ashore, and if the lieutenant is among them his first thought will be for the prisoners, not perhaps because our lives are precious to him, but lest he be forced to report our escape. Now is come our time of danger. Keep your heads low in the water, swim silently, and put all possible strength into the stroke, or we shall betray ourselves."

As I obeyed the faint light of the coming day could be seen in the east, and I knew we had not much time remaining in which to secrete ourselves before the sun rose.

Never did I swim faster than during the half-hour after Thad gave the word for speed, and then day had so far come that surrounding objects could be distinctly seen.

It was time to make for the shore, since the river could afford no protection against the prying eyes which might be on the Jersey shore, and Thad led the way to the bank, where grew a thicket of birch saplings.

We had not landed a single moment too soon, so far as I was concerned.

I had exerted myself to the utmost, and on reaching the shore my legs trembled under me till I was forced to clutch at the bushes for support.

Thad's first act was to kneel and put forth such a prayer as I have never heard, even though since then we have been many times exposed to great danger, and I joined him heartily in the thanksgiving, despite the scoffing words I had uttered immediately before leaving the schooner.

This done, we crawled into the thicket where we could be hidden from view of any who might pass either by land or water, although had a careful search been made we were but poorly screened from view by the small trees.

How great was the luxury of being able to throw oneself at full length on the warm ground!

"The business could not have been planned better," Sam said with a sigh of relief as if believing all danger was past; but Thad, who had weighed well the chances for escape, replied gravely:

"So far we have been successful, but I

count we are in greater danger than at the moment the Laughing Mary was sinking. That lieutenant will soon conclude we played him a trick, even though Barnes isn't suspicious, and once they are on our trail we are doomed to long imprisonment with hard usage, after what has been done by us."

CHAPTER XX.

FREEDOM.

I HAD composed myself for a needed rest; but Thad's words drove from my mind all else save the possibility of being recaptured, and I urged that we continue the flight at once.

"When liberty is at stake a fellow can endure more than we have and yet not be exhausted. Instead of lying here as if there were no Britishers in the country, why do we not make the best possible use of the time?"

"I propose that we start after getting our wind," Thad replied. "It was not my purpose to remain near the river many hours, for Barnes and the lieutenant will surely search in this direction before the day is ended."

I was all on fire to continue the flight, and argued so strongly against the necessity of an immediate resting spell that my companions finally agreed with me.

Now that it was light prudence demanded the greatest precaution, and instead of setting off across the country at full speed regardless of concealment, as I should have done but for my comrades, we reconnoitered the ground from every place of vantage before moving forward.

By such a course much time was consumed in traversing short distances, but we counted not the additional hours and labor so long as the spending of both insured safety.

Before noon I was thoroughly spent with travel, and had the danger been one whit less I should have fallen by the wayside long ere a halt was finally called.

Exhausted and footsore, I was rapidly becoming indifferent to recapture, as compared with an opportunity for rest, and my comrades must have noted my condition, for while Sam, although painfully weary himself, made a bed of leaves for me, Thad went in search of water.

So excited and nervous was I that the unconsciousness of sleep did not come when I closed my eyes, and although my companions believed me to be wrapped in

slumber, every word they spoke sounded distinctly in my ears.

"We must stay where we are till morning," Thad said to Sam. "Poor Eliphalet could go no further even though the Britishers were at our heels."

"As they soon will be if we remain here. We are not hidden in any way, and may be seen at a distance of a mile or more."

"Yet no move can be made while he is in that condition."

I tried to tell them I would push on as long as they should say was necessary, but the words refused to come.

I was neither asleep nor awake, but in a lethargy of fatigue.

"Think you we shall give them the slip?" I heard Sam ask, and Thad replied hesitatingly:

"I hope so; but it does not stand to reason Barnes would give up the search so soon, even though the lieutenant might consent, and it should not be a difficult task to follow our trail. More than those two do I fear. Reconnoitering parties may be abroad, and from such comes our greatest danger. If

there be a force of Britishers on the Jersey shore, sent doubtless by some traitor who has betrayed General Washington's plans, it is reasonable to suppose this side of the river will be closely watched, and whoever takes us prisoners the result will be the same."

"We might push on to the strip of trees ahead."

"They are more than a mile away."

"If 'Liphalet is unable to walk as far, we can carry him. No labor will be too severe if thereby we increase our chances for freedom."

Again I strove to speak, meaning to say I would go unaided as far as should be thought necessary, but my tongue refused its office.

From beneath my half-closed eyelids I saw that Thad remained as if in reflection for some time, when he said suddenly:

"We'll do it, Sam! I warrant we shall get 'Liphalet over the ground in some fashion, and once within the shelter of the trees we may count on being safe until the morning at least."

Then I saw my comrades stagger to their feet, and knew they raised me; but I could

not move, or thought I could not, although my will was good to do their bidding.

As Thad has told me since, I walked unaided, save that it was necessary to direct my steps, for I reeled to and fro like one drunken, but when we arrived I knew not.

Slumber visited me even as I moved forward, and when next I became conscious of myself the sun hung low in the west.

By my side lay Sam snoring like a trooper, and sitting near, as if he had just awakened, was Thad.

"How are you by this time?" my comrade asked in a cheery tone, as if he had no care save to minister to our comfort.

"Better than when you set out for this place," and I looked around at the snug refuge amid the leaves which had been selected while I lay like one dead.

Then I told Thad of the strange condition in which I had been when it was possible to hear but not to speak, and assured him I had recovered sufficiently to continue the journey whenever he should deem it safe to set out again.

As I learned from him, he and Sam had

been sleeping since shortly after noon, and with so much rest there seemed no reason why all of us could not push forward.

Before we ceased speaking I became aware that I was ravenously hungry, and Thad confessed to the same sensations.

"At the next house we run across I shall take the chances of asking for food," he said stoutly. "We cannot travel much further without something to eat, and must be so far from the river by this time that there is little danger the news of our escape has been told in this vicinity."

"Do you have any idea in which direction we should go to gain the American camp?" I asked, and Thad replied bluntly:

"It would be a lie if I should say I had. There is in my mind a general idea, much the same as about New York; but it will mainly be trusting to chance."

"And we may be going directly away from our friends."

Thad nodded, but did not reply, and I understood he feared that all our efforts at finding the way back might even now be useless.

"Is there no way of finding out the true course?" I cried after a pause.

"We can make inquiries; but by so doing we shall proclaim ourselves in favor of independence, and would come to grief if the question was asked of a Tory."

"Wouldn't it be much the same as the getting of food—worth the risk?"

"It may be so, 'Liphalet, it may be so. We will hear what Sam has to say on the question when he awakes, and it shall be for the majority to decide."

Then we fell silent, each occupied with the same thoughts, but not daring to share them because of the unpleasant speculations which might arise, and thus we remained until night had come once more.

The sun had been behind the hills an hour or more when Sam awakened, and his first question was as to whether there might be any hope of our finding something to eat.

"I've been dreaming of a sumptuous dinner, and now it seems as if I was well-nigh famished."

"I doubt not but that you are in truth," Thad replied gently, "and it is for you to say

if we shall make an attempt at begging food."

Sam was in favor of taking the chances, both in getting provisions and inquiring the true course to the American camp, and with this understanding we set out again, so stiff of limb that it was almost painful to put one foot before the other.

As we walked the labor of moving became less, and at the end of a quarter of an hour all three were traveling at such a rapid pace as would have encouraged us greatly had it been known to a certainty our course was the true one.

When an hour had passed we were on a highway, and approaching a dwelling from the windows of which could be seen a light.

Without argument it was decided we would make the first venture here, and Thad volunteered to act the part of spokesman.

I am free to confess that my heart seemed to be almost in my mouth when he knocked at the door with as much assurance as if we had ample means to pay for all we required, and I stepped behind my comrades to avoid attracting undue attention when the door

was opened after much clanking of bolts and chains.

A man with a lighted candle stood before us, and since he held this above his head the better to see us, we could get but little idea of his general appearance.

"We are hungry, sir, and beg you to give us food," Thad said, coming to the point of the matter without play of words. "We are not beggars except for this night, and are ready to pay by our labor for what you may be pleased to supply us with."

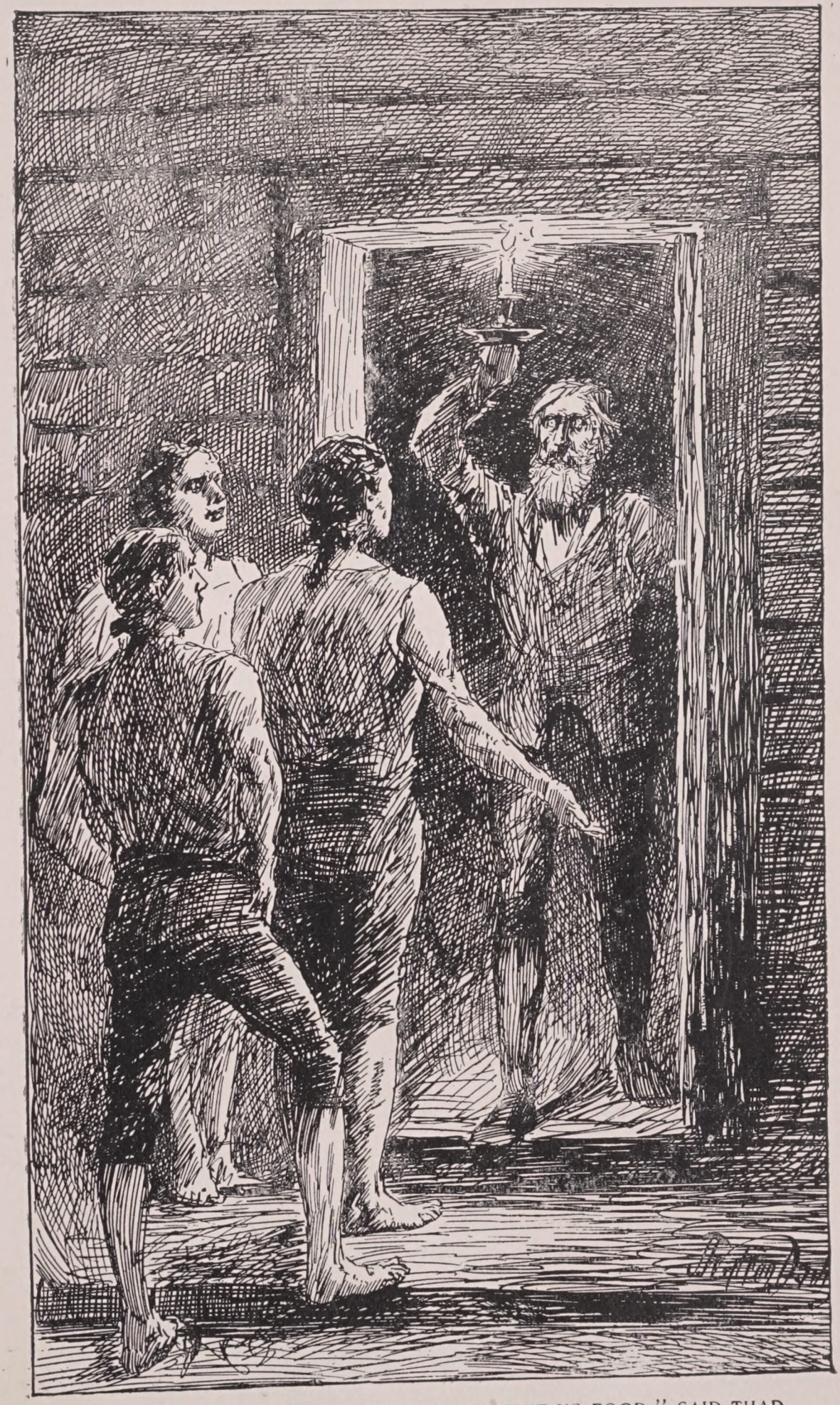
"Whence come you?"

"From Dobb's Ferry, and are now on our way to New York, with but poor knowledge of the most direct road."

The man hesitated as if trying to decide whether to grant our request or not, and I believed we would be denied the entertainment so sadly needed, when a voice from an inner room cried:

"Ask their names, Simon!"

It seemed to me that the voice of the last speaker sounded familiar, but I put the thought from me at once as something impossible.



"WE ARE HUNGRY, SIR, AND BEG YOU TO GIVE US FOOD," SAID THAD.

Laughing Mary, p. 396.

"Our names are Antill, Willett and Burr," Thad replied as if to the unseen speaker, and instantly there came a noise as if a piece of furniture had been overturned, after which the sound of hurried footsteps approaching the door could be heard. Involuntarily I shrank back yet further, believing danger of some kind menaced, but leaped forward a second later as the welcome face of Peleg Symonds came within the rays of light cast by the candle.

It did not seem possible such rare good fortune could be ours as that we should meet him at this time; but when he gripped my hand in his so firmly that I cried aloud because of the pain, his presence was fully proven.

During several moments we stood on the doorstep all talking at the same time, and no one understanding what the other was saying, until the host cried heartily:

"Come in, lads, come in! If it so be you're in need of food we have here that which will be of more cheer than the wagging of Peleg's tongue."

When we had entered the house the fisher-

man so far overcame his excitement and desire to learn why we were on foot instead of in the cabin of the Laughing Mary as to introduce us to the owner of the house.

"This is Simon Belcher, lads, a cousin of mine whom I'd lost sight of for many a year, an' only found him by accident when I came on an errand like unto yours, except that I had the money with which to pay for what I craved. He would make you welcome even though your pockets were empty; but since you are able to pay from my store, we'll have the best the house affords. Now tell me what has happened?"

Peleg was so eager in his desire for information that he barely gave us time to pay our respects to Simon Belcher before he again insisted on an explanation.

Thad told the story, Sam and I adding a word now and then when he failed to give himself proper credit for all that had been done, and interrupted by Peleg many times as the old fellow laughed and roared in great glee over the trick we had played so successfully.

Then when the tale was ended the fisher-

man crossed the apartment to shake hands with his cousin, as he said:

"These be rare lads, Simon, an' what they've done shows it. When I first went on board the Laughing Mary I had no idee I'd be willin', ay, even glad to serve under boys; but before bein' two hours in their company I said to myself, says I: 'Peleg Symonds, you're with mates as is mates, an' here you'll stay.' As I spoke then so I've done, an' when we part it'll be that they're tired of me, not of my own free will."

"Peleg gives us too high praise, Master Belcher, and says too little regarding himself," Thad added. "We have him to thank for very much since the day he joined us, and by no means the least is his friendship."

"Well spoken, lad!" the old man cried heartily, and then insisted on shaking each of us by the hand, after which he gave all his attention to hastening the preparations for the appetizing meal which now gave such promise as caused my mouth to water.

"It goes without sayin' that I'm sorry the schooner is gone to the bottom," Peleg continued; "but her end was what you might

call a blaze of glory, and the cost of the lesson you gave the Britishers is none too great, even though the Laughing Mary could outsail any craft of her size in these waters. I'd give a good part of what I've got in my pocket if I could see Barnes' face when he finds you've played him a second trick, and of much the same kind as before."

"He may never know it," Sam suggested.

"Don't think anything like that, lad. Britishers ain't fools, by a long shot, even though Barnes may be, an' when that lieutenant sets about figgerin' out the whole thing, he'll suddenly ask himself why the schooner should take it into her head to sink jest when you most needed she should. Then agin, he'll be askin' why you didn't go ashore with him if it was all an accident. No, no, Sam, don't you fear but the traitor knows all by this time, an' is fumin' over it in great style this very minute."

Then, after his mirth subsided a little, Peleg gave us an account of his visit to the American camp.

He had found his way with no great difficulty, and was received by Colonel Willett

himself, who at that very instant had concluded an audience with Silas Deane.

The information brought was, as he knew, of the greatest importance, but what effect it might have upon the movements of our army the fisherman was, as a matter of course, unable to say.

By the time his story came to an end, and he had repeated for at least the tenth time that he should have pushed forward within an hour had we not appeared so unexpectedly, Simon Belcher announced that supper was ready.

Never again will it be possible that food can be so appetizing to me!

We sat at table until our hunger was appeased, and then remained yet longer for the pleasure of eating, arising only after it had been decided that on the morrow, at an early hour, we set out for the American camp, at that time not more than twenty miles away.

And there we did arrive in due season, to be well received by my uncle, complimented by Lieutenant-Colonel Tupper, and flattered by all with whom we came in contact, until

there was danger of our being so puffed up by pride as to be useless ever after.

I cannot now speak of the battle which followed, nor even so much as make mention of what we then did.

With our arrival at the American camp the story of how we held command of, and how we lost the Laughing Mary has been told, and this portion of the records (which we shall continue if our lives are spared during the summer's campaign) must come to an end, first because, in view of the adventures we afterward experienced, the telling of this has taken too many words, and secondly because what follows must be given as a separate account for its better understanding.

We have not risen a single grade since having been made sergeant and corporals after our discovery of the plot against General Washington's life, and there is very good reason why higher rank should not be ours.

Although we have done our best at learning the duties of a soldier, neither of us (I myself think Thad should be made an exception), is sufficiently learned in such matters to take command of men older than ourselves,

and there is a full supply of officers, but a dearth of privates, consequently we are well content to remain in the ranks.

If the day shall come when it may be said of us that we are fitted to do all which is in our hearts to do for the cause, then I feel that we shall have achieved such rank and honor as will make my mother blush with pride, and my brave uncle glad to take us by the hands.

It may be we shall find the opportunity during the campaign which is about to begin, and if the good God sees fit to spare our lives, we will put forth every effort as gladly as we did at Chatterton Hill, at Trenton, at Princeton, and in the smaller affairs in which we have been engaged since the loss of the Laughing Mary, as shall be set down in due time and order.

THE END.

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"Harry Sandwith, the Westminster boy, may fairly be said to beat Mr. Henty's record. His adventures will delight boys by the audacity and peril they depict. . . . The story is one of Mr. Henty's best."—*Saturday Review.*

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"Does justice to the pluck and determination of the British soldiers during the unfortunate struggle against American emancipation. The son of an American loyalist, who remains true to our flag, falls among the hostile redskins in that very Huron country which has been endeared to us by the exploits of Hawkeye and Chingachgook."—*The Times.*

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"The story, from the critical moment of the killing of the sacred cat to the perilous exodus into Asia with which it closes, is very skillfully constructed and full of exciting adventures. It is admirably illustrated."—*Saturday Review.*

With Washington at Monmouth: A Story of Three Philadelphia Boys. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Three Philadelphia boys, Seth Graydon "whose mother conducted a boarding-house which was patronized by the British officers;" Enoch Ball, "son of that Mrs. Ball whose dancing school was situated on Letitia Street," and little Jacob, son of "Chris, the Baker," serve as the principal characters. The story is laid during the winter when Lord Howe held possession of the city, and the lads aid the cause by assisting the American spies who make regular and frequent visits from Valley Forge. One reads here of home-life in the captive city when bread was scarce among the people of the lower classes, and a reckless prodigality shown by the British officers, who passed the winter in feasting and merry-making while the members of the patriot army but a few miles away were suffering from both cold and hunger. The story abounds with pictures of Colonial life skillfully drawn, and the glimpses of Washington's soldiers which are given show that the work has not been hastily done, or without considerable study.

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"Mr. Henty's graphic prose pictures of the hopeless Jewish resistance to Roman sway add another leaf to his record of the famous wars of the world." —*Graphic.*

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"Facing Death" is a story with a purpose. It is intended to show that a lad who makes up his mind firmly and resolutely that he will rise in life, and who is prepared to face toil and ridicule and hardship to carry out his determination, is sure to succeed. The hero of the story is a typical British boy, dogged, earnest, generous, and though "shamefaced" to a degree, is ready to face death in the discharge of duty.

"The tale is well written and well illustrated, and there is much reality in the characters. If any father, clergyman, or schoolmaster is on the lookout for a good book to give as a present to a boy who is worth his salt, this is the book we would recommend."—*Standard.*

Tom Temple's Career. By HORATIO ALGER. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Tom Temple, a bright, self-reliant lad, by the death of his father becomes a boarder at the home of Nathan Middleton, a penurious insurance agent. Though well paid for keeping the boy, Nathan and his wife endeavor to bring Master Tom in line with their parsimonious habits. The lad ingeniously evades their efforts and revolutionizes the household. As Tom is heir to $40,000, he is regarded as a person of some importance until by an unfortunate combination of circumstances his fortune shrinks to a few hundreds. He leaves Plympton village to seek work in New York, whence he undertakes an important mission to California, around which center the most exciting incidents of his young career. Some of his adventures in the far west are so startling that the reader will scarcely close the book until the last page shall have been reached. The tale is written in Mr. Alger's most fascinating style, and is bound to please the very large class of boys who regard this popular author as a prime favorite.

Maori and Settler: A Story of the New Zealand War. By G. A. HENTY. With full-page Illustrations by ALFRED PEARSE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The Renshaws emigrate to New Zealand during the period of the war with the natives. Wilfrid, a strong, self-reliant, courageous lad, is the mainstay of the household. He has for his friend Mr. Atherton, a botanist and naturalist of herculean strength and unfailing nerve and humor. In the adventures among the Maoris, there are many breathless moments in which the odds seem hopelessly against the party, but they succeed in establishing themselves happily in one of the pleasant New Zealand valleys.

"Brimful of adventure, of humorous and interesting conversation, and vivid pictures of colonial life."—*Schoolmaster.*

Julian Mortimer: A Brave Boy's Struggle for Home and Fortune. By HARRY CASTLEMON. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Here is a story that will warm every boy's heart. There is mystery enough to keep any lad's imagination wound up to the highest pitch. The scene of the story lies west of the Mississippi River, in the days when emigrants made their perilous way across the great plains to the land of gold. One of the startling features of the book is the attack upon the wagon train by a large party of Indians. Our hero is a lad of uncommon nerve and pluck, a brave young American in every sense of the word. He enlists and holds the reader's sympathy from the outset. Surrounded by an unknown and constant peril, and assisted by the unswerving fidelity of a stalwart trapper, a real rough diamond, our hero achieves the most happy results. Harry Castlemon has written many entertaining stories for boys, and it would seem almost superfluous to say anything in his praise, for the youth of America regard him as a favorite author.

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A Jaunt Through Java: The Story of a Journey to the Sacred Mountain. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The central interest of this story is found in the thrilling adventures of two cousins, Hermon and Eustace Hadley, on their trip across the island of Java, from Samarang to the Sacred Mountain. In a land where the Royal Bengal tiger runs at large; where the rhinoceros and other fierce beasts are to be met with at unexpected moments; it is but natural that the heroes of this book should have a lively experience. Hermon not only distinguishes himself by killing a full-grown tiger at short range, but meets with the most startling adventure of the journey. There is much in this narrative to instruct as well as entertain the reader, and so deftly has Mr. Ellis used his material that there is not a dull page in the book. The two heroes are brave, manly young fellows, bubbling over with boyish independence. They cope with the many difficulties that arise during the trip in a fearless way that is bound to win the admiration of every lad who is so fortunate as to read their adventures.

Wrecked on Spider Island; or, How Ned Rogers Found the Treasure. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A "down-east" plucky lad who ships as cabin boy, not from love of adventure, but because it is the only course remaining by which he can gain a livelihood. While in his bunk, seasick, Ned Rogers hears the captain and mate discussing their plans for the willful wreck of the brig in order to gain the insurance. Once it is known he is in possession of the secret the captain maroons him on Spider Island, explaining to the crew that the boy is afflicted with leprosy. While thus involuntarily playing the part of a Crusoe, Ned discovers a wreck submerged in the sand, and overhauling the timbers for the purpose of gathering material with which to build a hut finds a considerable amount of treasure. Raising the wreck; a voyage to Havana under sail; shipping there a crew and running for Savannah; the attempt of the crew to seize the little craft after learning of the treasure on board, and, as a matter of course, the successful ending of the journey, all serve to make as entertaining a story of sea-life as the most captious boy could desire.

Geoff and Jim: A Story of School Life. By ISMAY THORN. Illustrated by A. G. WALKER. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"This is a prettily told story of the life spent by two motherless bairns at a small preparatory school. Both Geoff and Jim are very lovable characters, only Jim is the more so; and the scrapes he gets into and the trials he endures will, no doubt, interest a large circle of young readers."—*Church Times.*

"This is a capital children's story, the characters well portrayed, and the book tastefully bound and well illustrated."—*Schoolmaster.*

"The story can be heartily recommended as a present for boys."—*Standard.*

The Castaways; or, On the Florida Reefs. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This tale smacks of the salt sea. It is just the kind of story that the majority of boys yearn for. From the moment that the Sea Queen dispenses with the services of the tug in lower New York bay till the breeze leaves her becalmed off the coast of Florida, one can almost hear the whistle of the wind through her rigging, the creak of her straining cordage as she heels to the leeward, and feel her rise to the snow-capped waves which her sharp bow cuts into twin streaks of foam. Off Marquesas Keys she floats in a dead calm. Ben Clark, the hero of the story, and Jake, the cook, spy a turtle asleep upon the glassy surface of the water. They determine to capture him, and take a boat for that purpose, and just as they succeed in catching him a thick fog cuts them off from the vessel, and then their troubles be in. They take refuge on board a drifting hulk, a storm arises and they are cast ashore upon a low sandy key. Their adventures from this point cannot fail to charm the reader. As a writer for young people Mr. Otis is a prime favorite. His style is captivating, and never for a moment does he allow the interest to flag. In "The Castaways" he is at his best.

Tom Thatcher's Fortune. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Like all of Mr. Alger's heroes, Tom Thatcher is a brave, ambitious, unselfish boy. He supports his mother and sister on meager wages earned as a shoe-pegger in John Simpson's factory. The story begins with Tom's discharge from the factory, because Mr. Simpson felt annoyed with the lad for interrogating him too closely about his missing father. A few days afterward Tom learns that which induces him to start overland for California with the view of probing the family mystery. He meets with many adventures. Ultimately he returns to his native village, bringing consternation to the soul of John Simpson, who only escapes the consequences of his villainy by making full restitution to the man whose friendship he had betrayed. The story is told in that entertaining way which has made Mr. Alger's name a household word in so many homes.

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The two boys are from Portsmouth, N. H., and are introduced in August, 1781, when on the point of leaving home to enlist in Col. Scammell's regiment, then stationed near New York City. Their method of traveling is on horseback, and the author has given an interesting account of what was expected from boys in the Colonial days. The lads, after no slight amount of adventure, are sent as messengers—not soldiers—into the south to find the troops under Lafayette. Once with that youthful general they are given employment as spies, and enter the British camp, bringing away valuable information. The pictures of camp-life are carefully drawn, and the portrayal of Lafayette's character is thoroughly well done. The story is wholesome in tone, as are all of Mr. Otis' works. There is no lack of exciting incident which the youthful reader craves, but it is healthful excitement brimming with facts which every boy should be familiar with, and while the reader is following the adventures of Ben Jaffreys and Ned Allen he is acquiring a fund of historical lore which will remain in his memory long after that which he has memorized from text-books has been forgotten.

Lost in the Canon: Sam Willett's Adventures on the Great Colorado. By ALFRED R. CALHOUN. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This story hinges on a fortune left to Sam Willett, the hero, and the fact that it will pass to a disreputable relative if the lad dies before he shall have reached his majority. The Vigilance Committee of Hurley's Gulch arrest Sam's father and an associate for the crime of murder. Their lives depend on the production of the receipt given for money paid. This is in Sam's possession at the camp on the other side of the cañon. A messenger is dispatched to get it. He reaches the lad in the midst of a fearful storm which floods the cañon. His father's peril urges Sam to action. A raft is built on which the boy and his friends essay to cross the torrent. They fail to do so, and a desperate trip down the stream ensues. How the party finally escape from the horrors of their situation and Sam reaches Hurley's Gulch in the very nick of time, is described in a graphic style that stamps Mr. Calhoun as a master of his art.

Jack: A Topsy Turvy Story. By C. M. CRAWLEY-BOEVEY. With upward of Thirty Illustrations by H. J. A. MILES. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

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Search for the Silver City: A Tale of Adventure in Yucatan. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Two American lads, Teddy Wright and Neal Emery, embark on the steam yacht Day Dream for a short summer cruise to the tropics. Homeward bound the yacht is destroyed by fire. All hands take to the boats, but during the night the boat is cast upon the coast of Yucatan. They come across a young American named Cummings, who entertains them with the story of the wonderful Silver City, of the Chan Santa Cruz Indians. Cummings proposes with the aid of a faithful Indian ally to brave the perils of the swamp and carry off a number of the golden images from the temples. Pursued with relentless vigor for days their situation is desperate. At last their escape is effected in an astonishing manner. Mr. Otis has built his story on an historical foundation. It is so full of exciting incidents that the reader is quite carried away with the novelty and realism of the narrative.

Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Thrown upon his own resources Frank Fowler, a poor boy, bravely determines to make a living for himself and his foster-sister Grace. Going to New York he obtains a situation as cash boy in a dry goods store. He renders a service to a wealthy old gentleman named Wharton, who takes a fancy to the lad. Frank, after losing his place as cash boy, is enticed by an enemy to a lonesome part of New Jersey and held a prisoner. This move recoils upon the plotter, for it leads to a clue that enables the lad to establish his real identity. Mr. Alger's stories are not only unusually interesting, but they convey a useful lesson of pluck and manly independence.

Budd Boyd's Triumph; or, the Boy Firm of Fox Island. By WILLIAM P. CHIPMAN. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The scene of this story is laid on the upper part of Narragansett Bay, and the leading incidents have a strong salt-water flavor. Owing to the conviction of his father for forgery and theft, Budd Boyd is compelled to leave his home and strike out for himself. Chance brings Budd in contact with Judd Floyd. The two boys, being ambitious and clear sighted, form a partnership to catch and sell fish. The scheme is successfully launched, but the unexpected appearance on the scene of Thomas Bagsley, the man whom Budd believes guilty of the crimes attributed to his father, leads to several disagreeable complications that nearly caused the lad's ruin. His pluck and good sense, however, carry him through his troubles. In following the career of the boy firm of Boyd & Floyd, the youthful reader will find a useful lesson—that industry and perseverance are bound to lead to ultimate success.

The Errand Boy; or, How Phil Brent Won Success. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The career of "The Errand Boy" embraces the city adventures of a smart country lad who at an early age was abandoned by his father. Philip was brought up by a kind-hearted innkeeper named Brent. The death of Mrs. Brent paved the way for the hero's subsequent troubles. Accident introduces him to the notice of a retired merchant in New York, who not only secures him the situation of errand boy but thereafter stands as his friend. An unexpected turn of fortune's wheel, however, brings Philip and his father together. In "The Errand Boy" Philip Brent is possessed of the same sterling qualities so conspicuous in all of the previous creations of this delightful writer for our youth.

The Slate Picker: The Story of a Boy's Life in the Coal Mines. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This is a story of a boy's life in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. There are many thrilling situations, notably that of Ben Burton's leap into the "lion's mouth"—the yawning shute in the breakers—to escape a beating at the hands of the savage Spilkins, the overseer. Gracie Gordon is a little angel in rags, Terence O'Dowd is a manly, sympathetic lad, and Enoch Evans, the miner-poet, is a big-hearted, honest fellow, a true friend to all whose burdens seem too heavy for them to bear. Ben Burton, the hero, had a hard road to travel, but by grit and energy he advanced step by step until he found himself called upon to fill the position of chief engineer of the Kohinoor Coal Company.

A Runaway Brig; or, An Accidental Cruise. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"A Runaway Brig" is a sea tale, pure and simple, and that's where it strikes a boy's fancy. The reader can look out upon the wide shimmering sea as it flashes back the sunlight, and imagine himself afloat with Harry Vandyne, Walter Morse, Jim Libby and that old shell-back, Bob Brace, on the brig Bonita, which lands on one of the Bahama keys. Finally three strangers steal the craft, leaving the rightful owners to shift for themselves aboard a broken-down tug. The boys discover a mysterious document which enables them to find a buried treasure, then a storm comes on and the tug is stranded. At last a yacht comes in sight and the party with the treasure is taken off the lonely key. The most exacting youth is sure to be fascinated with this entertaining story.

Fairy Tales and Stories. By HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"If I were asked to select a child's library I should name these three volumes 'English,' 'Celtic,' and 'Indian Fairy Tales,' with Grimm and Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales."—*Independent.*

The Island Treasure; or, Harry Darrel's Fortune. By FRANK H. CONVERSE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Harry Darrel, an orphan, having received a nautical training on a school-ship, is bent on going to sea with a boyish acquaintance named Dan Plunket. A runaway horse changes his prospects. Harry saves Dr. Gregg from drowning and the doctor presents his preserver with a bit of property known as Gregg's Island, and makes the lad sailing-master of his sloop yacht. A piratical hoard is supposed to be hidden somewhere on the island. After much search and many thwarted plans, at last Dan discovers the treasure and is the means of finding Harry's father. Mr. Converse's stories possess a charm of their own which is appreciated by lads who delight in good healthy tales that smack of salt water.

The Boy Explorers: The Adventures of Two Boys in Alaska. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Two boys, Raymond and Spencer Manning, travel from San Francisco to Alaska to join their father in search of their uncle, who, it is believed, was captured and detained by the inhabitants of a place called the "Heart of Alaska." On their arrival at Sitka the boys with an Indian guide set off across the mountains. The trip is fraught with perils that test the lads' courage to the utmost. Reaching the Yukon River they build a raft and float down the stream, entering the Mysterious River, from which they barely escape with their lives, only to be captured by natives of the Heart of Alaska. All through their exciting adventures the lads demonstrate what can be accomplished by pluck and resolution, and their experience makes one of the most interesting tales ever written.

The Treasure Finders: A Boy's Adventures in Nicaragua. By JAMES OTIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Roy and Dean Coloney, with their guide Tongla, leave their father's indigo plantation to visit the wonderful ruins of an ancient city. The boys eagerly explore the dismantled temples of an extinct race and discover three golden images cunningly hidden away. They escape with the greatest difficulty; by taking advantage of a festive gathering they seize a canoe and fly down the river. Eventually they reach safety with their golden prizes. Mr. Otis is the prince of story tellers, for he handles his material with consummate skill. We doubt if he has ever written a more entertaining story than "The Treasure Finders."

Household Fairy Tales. By the BROTHERS GRIMM. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"As a collection of fairy tales to delight children of all ages this work ranks second to none."—*Daily Graphic.*

Dan the Newsboy. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The reader is introduced to Dan Mordaunt and his mother living in a poor tenement, and the lad is pluckily trying to make ends meet by selling papers in the streets of New York. A little heiress of six years is confided to the care of the Mordaunts. At the same time the lad obtains a position in a wholesale house. He soon demonstrates how valuable he is to the firm by detecting the bookkeeper in a bold attempt to rob his employers. The child is kidnaped and Dan tracks the child to the house where she is hidden, and rescues her. The wealthy aunt of the little heiress is so delighted with Dan's courage and many good qualities that she adopts him as her heir, and the conclusion of the book leaves the hero on the high road to every earthly desire.

Tony the Hero: A Brave Boy's Adventure with a Tramp. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Tony, a sturdy bright-eyed boy of fourteen, is under the control of Rudolph Rugg, a thorough rascal, shiftless and lazy, spending his time tramping about the country. After much abuse Tony runs away and gets a job as stable boy in a country hotel. Tony is heir to a large estate in England, and certain persons find it necessary to produce proof of the lad's death. Rudolph for a consideration hunts up Tony and throws him down a deep well. Of course Tony escapes from the fate provided for him, and by a brave act makes a rich friend, with whom he goes to England, where he secures his rights and is prosperous. The fact that Mr. Alger is the author of this entertaining book will at once recommend it to all juvenile readers.

A Young Hero; or, Fighting to Win. BY EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This story tells how a valuable solid silver service was stolen from the Misses Perkinpine, two very old and simple minded ladies. Fred Sheldon, the hero of this story and a friend of the old ladies, undertakes to discover the thieves and have them arrested. After much time spent in detective work, he succeeds in discovering the silver plate and winning the reward for its restoration. During the narrative a circus comes to town and a thrilling account of the escape of the lion from its cage, with its recapture, is told in Mr. Ellis' most fascinating style. Every boy will be glad to read this delightful book.

The Days of Bruce: A Story from Scottish History. By GRACE AGUILAR. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"There is a delightful freshness, sincerity and vivacity about all of Grace Aguilar's stories which cannot fail to win the interest and admiration of every lover of good reading."—*Boston Beacon.*

Tom the Bootblack; or, The Road to Success. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A bright, enterprising lad was Tom the bootblack. He was not at all ashamed of his humble calling, though always on the lookout to better himself. His guardian, old Jacob Morton, died, leaving him a small sum of money and a written confession that Tom, instead of being of humble origin, was the son and heir of a deceased Western merchant, and had been defrauded out of his just rights by an unscrupulous uncle. The lad started for Cincinnati to look up his heritage. But three years passed away before he obtained his first clue. Mr. Grey, the uncle, did not hesitate to employ a ruffian to kill the lad. The plan failed, and Gilbert Grey, once Tom the bootblack, came into a comfortable fortune. This is one of Mr. Alger's best stories.

Captured by Zulus: A story of Trapping in Africa. By HARRY PRENTICE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This story details the adventures of two lads, Dick Elsworth and Bob Harvey, in the wilds of South Africa, for the purpose of obtaining a supply of zoological curiosities. By stratagem the Zulus capture Dick and Bob and take them to their principal kraal or village. The lads escape death by digging their way out of the prison hut by night. They are pursued, and after a rough experience the boys eventually rejoin the expedition and take part in several wild animal hunts. The Zulus finally give up pursuit and the expedition arrives at the coast without further trouble. Mr. Prentice has a delightful method of blending fact with fiction. He tells exactly how wild-beast collectors secure specimens on their native stamping grounds, and these descriptions make very entertaining reading.

Tom the Ready; or, Up from the Lowest. By RANDOLPH HILL. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

This is a dramatic narrative of the unaided rise of a fearless, ambitious boy from the lowest round of fortune's ladder—the gate of the poorhouse—to wealth and the governorship of his native State. Thomas Seacomb begins life with a purpose. While yet a schoolboy he conceives and presents to the world the germ of the Overland Express Co. At the very outset of his career jealousy and craft seek to blast his promising future. Later he sets out to obtain a charter for a railroad line in connection with the express business. Now he realizes what it is to match himself against capital. Yet he wins and the railroad is built. Only an uncommon nature like Tom's could successfully oppose such a combine. How he manages to win the battle is told by Mr. Hill in a masterful way that thrills the reader and holds his attention and sympathy to the end.

Roy Gilbert's Search: A Tale of the Great Lakes. By WM. P. CHIPMAN. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A deep mystery hangs over the parentage of Roy Gilbert. He arranges with two schoolmates to make a tour of the Great Lakes on a steam launch. The three boys leave Erie on the launch and visit many points of interest on the lakes. Soon afterward the lad is conspicuous in the rescue of an elderly gentleman and a lady from a sinking yacht. Later on the cruise of the launch is brought to a disastrous termination and the boys narrowly escape with their lives. The hero is a manly, self-reliant boy, whose adventures will be followed with interest.

The Young Scout; The Story of a West Point Lieutenant. By EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The crafty Apache chief Geronimo but a few years ago was the most terrible scourge of the southwest border. The author has woven, in a tale of thrilling interest, all the incidents of Geronimo's last raid. The hero is Lieutenant James Decker, a recent graduate of West Point. Ambitious to distinguish himself so as to win well-deserved promotion, the young man takes many a desperate chance against the enemy and on more than one occasion narrowly escapes with his life. The story naturally abounds in thrilling situations, and being historically correct, it is reasonable to believe it will find great favor with the boys. In our opinion Mr. Ellis is the best writer of Indian stories now before the public.

Adrift in the Wilds: The Adventures of Two Shipwrecked Boys. BY EDWARD S. ELLIS. 12mo, cloth, price, $1.00.

Elwood Brandon and Howard Lawrence, cousins and schoolmates, accompanied by a lively Irishman called O'Rooney, are en route for San Francisco. Off the coast of California the steamer takes fire. The two boys and their companion reach the shore with several of the passengers. While O'Rooney and the lads are absent inspecting the neighborhood O'Rooney has an exciting experience and young Brandon becomes separated from his party. He is captured by hostile Indians, but is rescued by an Indian whom the lads had assisted. This is a very entertaining narrative of Southern California in the days immediately preceding the construction of the Pacific railroads. Mr. Ellis seems to be particularly happy in this line of fiction, and the present story is fully as entertaining as anything he has ever written.

The Red Fairy Book. Edited by ANDREW LANG. Profusely Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"A gift-book that will charm any child, and all older folk who have been fortunate enough to retain their taste for the old nursery stories."—*Literary World.*

The Boy Cruisers; or, Paddling in Florida. By St. George Rathborne. 12mo, cloth, price, $1.00.

Boys who like an admixture of sport and adventure will find this book just to their taste. We promise them that they will not go to sleep over the rattling experiences of Andrew George and Roland Carter, who start on a canoe trip along the Gulf coast, from Key West to Tampa, Florida. Their first adventure is with a pair of rascals who steal their boats. Next they run into a gale in the Gulf and have a lively experience while it lasts. After that they have a lively time with alligators and divers varieties of the finny tribe. Andrew gets into trouble with a band of Seminole Indians and gets away without having his scalp raised. After this there is no lack of fun till they reach their destination. That Mr. Rathborne knows just how to interest the boys is apparent at a glance, and lads who are in search of a rare treat will do well to read this entertaining story.

Guy Harris: The Runaway. By Harry Castlemon. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Guy Harris lived in a small city on the shore of one of the Great Lakes. His head became filled with quixotic notions of going West to hunt grizzlies, in fact, Indians. He is persuaded to go to sea, and gets a glimpse of the rough side of life in a sailor's boarding house. He ships on a vessel and for five months leads a hard life. He deserts his ship at San Francisco and starts out to become a backwoodsman, but rough experiences soon cure him of all desire to be a hunter. At St. Louis he becomes a clerk and for a time he yields to the temptations of a great city. The book will not only interest boys generally on account of its graphic style, but will put many facts before their eyes in a new light. This is one of Castlemon's most attractive stories.

The Train Boy. By Horatio Alger, Jr. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Paul Palmer was a wide-awake boy of sixteen who supported his mother and sister by selling books and papers on one of the trains running between Chicago and Milwaukee. He detects a young man named Luke Denton in the act of picking the pocket of a young lady, and also incurs the enmity of his brother Stephen, a worthless follow. Luke and Stephen plot to ruin Paul, but their plans are frustrated. In a railway accident many passengers are killed, but Paul is fortunate enough to assist a Chicago merchant, who out of gratitude takes him into his employ. Paul is sent to manage a mine in Custer City and executes his commission with tact and judgment and is well started on the road to business prominence. This is one of Mr. Alger's most attractive stories and is sure to please all readers.

Joe's Luck: A Boy's Adventures in California. By HORATIO ALGER, JR. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Without a doubt Joe Mason was a lucky boy, but he deserved the golden chances that fell to his lot, for he had the pluck and ambition to push himself to the front. Joe had but one dollar in the world when he stood despondently on the California Mail Steamship Co.'s dock in New York watching the preparations incident to the departure of the steamer. The same dollar was still Joe's entire capital when he landed in the bustling town of tents and one-story cabins—the San Francisco of '51, and inside of the week the boy was proprietor of a small restaurant earning a comfortable profit. The story is chock full of stirring incidents, while the amusing situations are furnished by Joshua Bickford, from Pumpkin Hollow, and the fellow who modestly styles himself the "Rip-tail Roarer, from Pike Co., Missouri." Mr. Alger never writes a poor book, and "Joe's Luck" is certainly one of his best.

Three Bright Girls: A Story of Chance and Mischance. By ANNIE E. ARMSTRONG. With full page Illustrations by W. PARKINSON. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

By a sudden turn of fortune's wheel the three heroines of this story are brought down from a household of lavish comfort to meet the incessant cares and worries of those who have to eke out a very limited income. And the charm of the story lies in the cheery helpfulness of spirit developed in the girls by their changed circumstances; while the author finds a pleasant ending to all their happy makeshifts.

"The story is charmingly told, and the book can be warmly recommended as a present for girls."—*Standard.*

Giannetta: A Girl's Story of Herself. By ROSA MULHOLLAND. With full-page Illustrations by LOCKHART BOGLE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The daughter of a gentleman, who had married a poor Swiss girl, was stolen as an infant by some of her mother's relatives. The child having died, they afterward for the sake of gain substitute another child for it, and the changeling, after becoming a clever modeler of clay images, is suddenly transferred to the position of a rich heiress. She develops into a good and accomplished woman, and though the imposture of her early friends is finally discovered, she has gained too much love and devotion to be really a sufferer by the surrender of her estates.

"Extremely well told and full of interest. Giannetta is a true heroine—warm-hearted, self-sacrificing, and, as all good women nowadays are, largely touched with enthusiasm of humanity. The illustrations are unusually good. One of the most attractive gift books of the season."—*The Academy.*

Margery Merton's Girlhood. By ALICE CORKRAN. With full-page Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

The experiences of an orphan girl who in infancy is left by her father—an officer in India—to the care of an elderly aunt residing near Paris. The accounts of the various persons who have an after influence on the story, the school companions of Margery, the sisters of the Conventual College of Art, the professor, and the peasantry of Fontainebleau, are singularly vivid. There is a subtle attraction about the book which will make it a great favorite with thoughtful girls.

"Another book for girls we can warmly commend. There is a delightful piquancy in the experiences and trials of a young English girl who studies painting in Paris."—*Saturday Review.*

Under False Colors: A Story from Two Girls' Lives. By SARAH DOUDNEY. With full-page Illustrations by G. G. KILBURNE. 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

A story which has in it so strong a dramatic element that it will attract readers of all ages and of either sex. The incidents of the plot, arising from the thoughtless indulgence of a deceptive freak, are exceedingly natural, and the keen interest of the narrative is sustained from beginning to end.

"Sarah Doudney has no superior as a writer of high-toned stories—pure in style, original in conception, and with skillfully wrought out plots; but we have seen nothing equal in dramatic energy to this book."—*Christian Leader.*

Down the Snow Stairs; or, From Good-night to Good-morning. By ALICE CORKRAN. With Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

This is a remarkable story: full of vivid fancy and quaint originality. In its most fantastic imaginings it carries with it a sense of reality, and derives a singular attraction from that combination of simplicity, originality, and subtle humor, which is so much appreciated by lively and thoughtful children. Children of a larger growth will also be deeply interested in Kitty's strange journey, and her wonderful experiences.

"Among all the Christmas volumes which the year has brought to our table this one stands out *facile princeps*—a gem of the first water, bearing upon every one of its pages the signet mark of genius. . . . All is told with such simplicity and perfect naturalness that the dream appears to be a solid reality. It is indeed a Little Pilgrim's Progress."—*Christian Leader.*

The Tapestry Room: A Child's Romance. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. Illustrated by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"Mrs. Molesworth is a charming painter of the nature and ways of children; and she has done good service in giving us this charming juvenile which will delight the young people."—*Athenæum*, London.

Little Miss Peggy: Only a Nursery Story. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. With Illustrations by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

Mrs. Molesworth's children are finished studies. She is never sentimental, but writes common sense in a straightforward manner. A joyous earnest spirit pervades her work, and her sympathy is unbounded. She loves them with her whole heart, while she lays bare their little minds, and expresses their foibles, their faults, their virtues, their inward struggles, their conception of duty, and their instinctive knowledge of the right and wrong of things. She knows their characters, she understands their wants, and she desires to help them.

Polly: A New Fashioned Girl. By L. T. MEADE. Illustrated 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

Few authors have achieved a popularity equal to Mrs. Meade as a writer of stories for young girls. Her characters are living beings of flesh and blood, not lay figures of conventional type. Into the trials and crosses, and everyday experiences, the reader enters at once with zest and hearty sympathy. While Mrs. Meade always writes with a high moral purpose, her lessons of life, purity and nobility of character are rather inculcated by example than intruded as sermons.

Rosy. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. Illustrated by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

Mrs. Molesworth, considering the quality and quantity of her labors, is the best story-teller for children England has yet known. This is a bold statement and requires substantiation. Mrs. Molesworth, during the last six years, has never failed to occupy a prominent place among the juvenile writers of the season.

"A very pretty story. . . . The writer knows children and their ways well. . . . The illustrations are exceedingly well drawn."—*Spectator.*

Little Sunshine's Holiday: A Picture from Life. By MISS MULOCK. Illustrated by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"This is a pretty narrative of baby life, describing the simple doings and sayings of a very charming and rather precocious child nearly three years old."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

"Will be delightful to those who have nurseries peopled by 'Little Sunshines' of their own."—*Athenæum.*

Esther: A Book for Girls. By ROSA N. CAREY. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"She inspires her readers simply by bringing them in contact with the characters, who are in themselves inspiring. Her simple stories are woven in order to give her an opportunity to describe her characters by their own conduct in seasons of trial."—*Chicago Times.*

Sweet Content. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. Illustrated by W. RAINEY. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"It seems to me not at all easier to draw a lifelike child than to draw a lifelike man or woman: Shakespeare and Webster were the only two men of their age who could do it with perfect delicacy and success. Our own age is more fortunate, on this single score at least, having a larger and far nobler proportion of female writers; among whom, since the death of George Eliot, there is none left whose touch is so exquisite and masterly, whose love is so thoroughly according to knowledge, whose bright and sweet invention is so fruitful, so truthful, or so delightful as Mrs. Molesworth."—A. C. SWINBURNE.

One of a Covey. By the Author of "Honor Bright," "Miss Toosey's Mission." With Numerous Illustrations by H. J. A. MILES. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"Full of spirit and life, so well sustained throughout that grown-up readers may enjoy it as much as children. This 'Covey' consists of the twelve children of a hard-pressed Dr. Partridge. out of which is chosen a little girl to be adopted by a spoilt, fine lady. . . . It is one of the best books of the season."—*Guardian.*

"We have rarely read a story for boys and girls with greater pleasure. One of the chief characters would not have disgraced Dickens' pen."—*Literary World.*

The Little Princess of Tower Hill. By L. T. MEADE. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"This is one of the prettiest books for children published, as pretty as a pond-lily, and quite as fragrant. Nothing could be imagined more attractive to young people than such a combination of fresh pages and fair pictures; and while children will rejoice over it—which is much better than crying for it—it is a book that can be read with pleasure even by older boys and girls."—*Boston Advertiser.*

Honor Bright; or, The Four-Leaved Shamrock. By the Author of "One of a Covey," "Miss Toosey's Mission," etc., etc. With full-page Illustrations, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"It requires a special talent to describe the sayings and doings of children, and the author of 'Honor Bright,' 'One of a Covey,' possesses that talent in no small degree."—*Literary Churchman.*

"A cheery, sensible, and healthy tale."—*The Times.*

The Cuckoo Clock. By MRS. MOLESWORTH. With Illustrations by WALTER CRANE. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"A beautiful little story. It will be read with delight by every child into whose hands it is placed. . . . The author deserves all the praise that has been, is, and will be bestowed on 'The Cuckoo Clock.' Children's stories are plentiful, but one like this is not to be met with every day."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

Girl Neighbors; or, The Old Fashion and the New. By SARAH TYTLER. With full-page Illustrations by C. T. GARLAND. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"One of the most effective and quietly humorous of Miss Tytler's stories. 'Girl Neighbors' is a pleasant comedy, not so much of errors as of prejudices got rid of, very healthy, very agreeable, and very well written."—*Spectator.*

The Little Lame Prince. By MISS MULOCK. Illustrated, cloth, price 75 cents.

"No sweeter—that is the proper word—Christmas story for the little folks could easily be found, and it is as delightful for older readers as well. There is a moral to it which the reader can find out for himself, if he chooses to think."—*Herald*, Cleveland.

The Adventures of a Brownie. As Told to my Child. By MISS MULOCK. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"The author of this delightful little book leaves it in doubt all through whether there actually is such a creature in existence as a Brownie, but she makes us hope that there might be."—*Standard*, Chicago.

Only a Girl: A Story of a Quiet Life. A Tale of Brittany. Adapted from the the French by C. A. JONES. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price $1.00.

"We can thoroughly recommend this brightly written and homely narrative."—*Saturday Review.*

Little Rosebud; or, Things Will Take a Turn. By BEATRICE HARRADEN. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"A most delightful little book. . . . Miss Harraden is so bright, so healthy, and so natural withal that the book ought, as a matter of duty, to be added to every girl's library in the land."—*Boston Transcript.*

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Joan's Adventures at the North Pole and Elsewhere. By ALICE CORKRAN. Illustrated, 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"Wonderful as the adventures of Joan are, it must be admitted that they are very naturally worked out and very plausibly presented. Altogether this is an excellent story for girls."—*Saturday Review.*

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Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. By LEWIS CARROLL. With 42 Illustrations by JOHN TENNIEL. 12mo, cloth, price 75 cents.

"From first to last, almost without exception, this story is delightfully droll, humorous and illustrated in harmony with the story."—*New York Express.*

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